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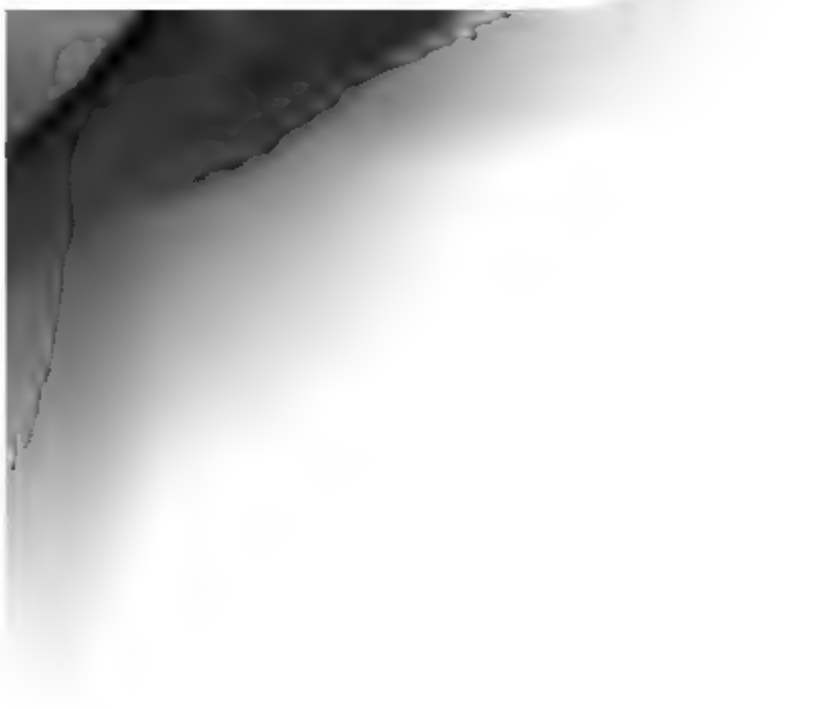

SERMONS

BY

JEAN-BAPTISTE MASSILLON,

BISHOP OF CLERMONT.

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED

BY WILLIAM DICKSON;

AND

DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION,

TO

HER GRACE

THE DUTCHESS OF BUCCLEUGH.

COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES.

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SERMON

SERMON I.

ON THE DELAY OF CONVERSION.

JOHN i. 23.

I am the voice of one crying in the wilderneſs, make ſtraight the way of the Lord.

IT is that he may enter into our hearts that Jeſus Chriſt announces, by John the Baptiſt, that we have the way to make ſtraight for him, by removing all thoſe obſtacles which, like a wall of ſeparation, riſe up betwixt his mercy and our wretchedneſs. Now, theſe obſtacles are the crimes with which we ſo often ſtain ourſelves, which always ſubſiſt, becauſe it would be neceſſary to expiate them by penitence, and we expiate them not: theſe obſtacles are the paſſions by which our heart fooliſhly allows itſelf to be carried away, which are always living, becauſe, in order to deſtroy, it would be neceſſary to conquer them; and we never conquer them: theſe obſtacles are the occaſions againſt which our innocence hath ſo often ſplit, and which are ſtill every day the rock fatal to all our reſolutions, becauſe, in place of yielding to that inward inclination which leads us towards them it would be neceſſary to ſhun them; and we ſhun them not: in a word, the true and only manner of making ſtraight the way of our hearts for Jeſus Chriſt, is that of changing our life, and of being ſincerely converted.

But, though the buſineſs of our converſion be the moſt important with which we can be entruſted here below, ſeeing that through it alone we can draw Jeſus Chriſt into our hearts; though it be the only one truly intereſting to us, ſince on it depends our eternal happineſs; yet, O deplorable blindneſs! it is never conſidered by us a matter either of urgency or of importance; it is continually put off to ſome other time, as if times and ſeaſons were at our diſpoſal. What wait you, Chriſtians, my brethren? Jeſus Chriſt ceaſeth not to forewarn you, by his miniſters, of the evils which threaten your impatience, and the delay of your converſion; he hath long announced to you, through our mouth, that, unleſs you repent, you moſt aſſuredly ſhall periſh.

Nor is he ſatisfied with publicly warning you through the voice of his miniſters, he ſpeaks to you in the bottom of your hearts, and continually whiſpers to you, Is it not time now to withdraw yourſelf from that guilt in which, for ſo many years, you have been plunged, and from which almoſt nothing but a miracle can now extricate you? Is it not time to reſtore peace to your heart, to baniſh from it that chaos of paſſions which has occaſioned all the misfortunes of your life; to prepare for yourſelf at leaſt ſome few happy and tranquil days, and, after having lived ſo long for a world which hath always left you empty and uneaſy, at laſt to live for a God who alone can give peace and tranquillity to your heart? Will you not at laſt beſtow a thought upon your eternal intereſts, and, after a life wholly frivolous, return to the true one, and, in ſerving God, adopt the only wiſe plan which man can purſue upon earth? Are you not wearied out with ſtruggling againſt thoſe remorſes which tear you, that ſadneſs of guilt which weighs you down, that emptineſs of the world which ev-

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ery where purſues you? And do you not wiſh to finiſh at laſt your misfortunes and your diſquietudes, by finiſhing your crimes?

What ſhall we reply to that inward monitor which hath ſo long ſpoken in the bottom of our hearts? What pretexts ſhall we oppoſe? *1ſtly*, That we are not, as yet, furniſhed by God with the ſuccours neceſſary to enable us to quit the unhappy ſtate in which we live: *2dly*, That we are at preſent too much engaged by the paſſions to think of a new life. That is to ſay, that we ſtart two pretexts for delaying our converſion; the firſt drawn from the part of God, the ſecond from within ourſelves. The firſt which juſtifies us, by accuſing God of being wanting to us; the ſecond which comforts us, by alledging to ourſelves our inability of, as yet, returning to him. Thus we delay our converſion, under the belief that grace is wanting, and that, as yet, God deſireth us not; we delay our converſion, becauſe we flatter ourſelves that ſome future day we ſhall be leſs attached to the world and to the paſſions, and more in a ſituation to begin a Chriſtian and an orderly life: two pretexts which are continually in the mouth of ſinners, and which I now mean to overthrow.

PART I. It is not of to-day that men have dared to accuſe even God himſelf for their tranſgreſſions, and have tryed to render his wiſdom and his goodneſs reſponſible for their iniquitous weakneſſes. It may be ſaid that this blindneſs entered with ſin into the world; the firſt man ſought not elſewhere an excuſe for his guilt; and, far from appeaſing the Lord whom he had ſo lately diſobeyed, by an humble confeſſion of his wretchedneſs, he accuſed him of having been himſelf the cauſe of his diſobedience, in aſſociating with him the woman.

And

And ſuch, my brethren, is the illuſion of almoſt all ſouls living in guilt, and who delay to a future day that converſion required of them by God. They are continually repeating that converſion does not depend upon us; that it is the Lord who muſt change their heart, and beſtow upon them that faith and grace which they, as yet, have not. Thus they are not ſatisfied with provoking his anger, by delaying their converſion; they even inſult him by laying upon him the blame of their obſtinacy, and of the delay of their penitence. Let us now overthrow the error and the impiety of this diſpoſition; and, in order to render the criminal ſoul more inexcuſable in his impenitence, let us deprive him at leaſt of the pretext.

You tell us then, *1ſtly*, that if you had faith, and were thoroughly convinced of the truth of religion, you would be converted; but that faith is a gift of God which you expect from him alone, and that as ſoon as he ſhall have given it to you, you will eaſily and heartily begin to adopt your party. Firſt pretext; the want of faith, and it is God alone who can give it.

But I ought firſt to aſk you, how have you then loſt that faith ſo precious? You had received it in your baptiſm; a Chriſtian education had cheriſhed it in your heart; it had grown up with you; it was an eſtimable talent which the Lord had entruſted to you in diſcerning you from ſo many infidel nations, and in marking you, from the moment you quitted your mother's womb, with the ſeal of ſalvation. What have you then done with the gift of God? Who hath effaced from your forehead that ſign of eternal election? Is it not the corruption of the paſſions, and that blindneſs which has been their juſt puniſhment! Did you ſuſpect the faith of your fathers before you became diſſolute

diſſolute and abandoned? Is it not yourſelf who hath extinguiſhed in the dirt that celeſtial torch, which the church in regenerating you, had placed in your hand, to enlighten your way through the obſcurities and the dangers of this life? Why then, accuſe God of that waſte which you have made of his favours? His is the right of reclaiming his own gift; to him it belongs to make you accountable for the talent which he had entruſted to your care; to ſay to you: "Wicked and ungrateful ſervant, "what had I done for others, that I had not done for thee? "I had embelliſhed thy ſoul with the gift of faith, and "with the mark of my children: thou haſt caſt that pre- "cious Jewel before unclean animals; thou haſt extin- "guiſhed faith, and the light that I had placed within thee: "I have long, in ſpite of thyſelf, preſerved it in thy heart: "I have cauſed it to outlive all the impious efforts, which, "becauſe it was become troubleſome to thy debaucheries, "thou haſt made to extinguiſh it: thou knoweſt how "much it hath coſt thee to throw off the yoke of faith, and "to be what thou now art: and this dreadful ſtate, which is "the juſteſt puniſhment of thy crimes, ſhould now become "their only excuſe? And thou ſayeſt, that the want of faith "is no fault of thine, ſeeing it depends not on man, thou, who "haſt had ſuch difficulty in tearing it from the bottom of "thy ſoul? And thou pretendeſt that it is me who ought "to give it to thee, if I wiſh thee to ſerve me, I, who "reclaim it from thee, and who ſo juſtly complain that "thou haſt loſt it?" Enter into judgment with your Lord, and juſtify yourſelf, if you have any reply to make to him.

And to make you, my dear hearer, more ſenſible of all the weakneſs of this pretext; you complain that you want faith; you ſay that you would wiſh to have it; that happy

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tainty of the truths of faith, the godly would always be the wiſeſt and the ſafeſt. Your ſtate, therefore, is rather the vague determination of an agitated heart, which dreads to break its chains, than a real and actual ſuſpicion of faith, and a fear leſt, in ſacrificing to it all your iniquitous pleaſures, your pains and the time ſhould be loſt: your uncertainties are efforts, which you make to defend yourſelf againſt a remnant of faith which ſtill inwardly enlightens you, rather than a proof that you had already loſt it. Seek no longer then to convince yourſelf; rather endeavour to oppoſe no more that internal conviction which enlightens and condemns you. Follow the dictates of your own heart; be reconciled to yourſelf; allow a conſcience to ſpeak, which never fails to plead within you for faith, againſt your own exceſſes; in a word, hearken to yourſelf, and you will be a believer.

But it is admitted, you will ſay, that if nothing more were to be required than to believe, that would eaſily be ſubſcribed to. This is the ſecond pretext of the ſinners who delay; it is the want of grace, and they await it: converſion is not the work of man, and it belongs to God alone to change the heart.

Now, I ſay that this pretext, ſo often repeated in the world, and ſo continually in the mouth of almoſt all thoſe who live in guilt; if we conſider the ſinner who alledges it, it is unjuſt; if we view on the part of God, on whom he lays the blame, it is raſh and ungrateful; if we examine it in itſelf, it is fooliſh and unwarrantable.

In the firſt place, if we conſider the ſinner who alledged it, it is unjuſt; for you complain that God hath not yet touched you, that you feel no reliſh for devotion, and that

reliſh

relish before you can think of changing your life. But, full of paſſions as you are, can you reaſonably expect or exact of God that he ſhall ever make you to feel a decided inclination for piety? Would you that your heart, ſtill plunged in debauchery, feel the pure delights and the chaſte attractions of virtue? You are ſimilar to a man who, nouriſhing himſelf with gall and wormwood, ſhould afterwards complain that every thing feels bitter to his palate. You ſay that if God wiſh you to ſerve him, in his power alone it is to give you a relish for his ſervice: You who every day defile your heart by the meaneſt exceſſes; you who every moment place a freſh chaos betwixt God and you; you, in a word, who, by new debaucheries, finally extinguiſh in your ſoul even thoſe ſentiments of natural virtue, thoſe happy impreſſions of innocence and of regularity born with you, which might have been the means of recalling you to virtue and to righteouſneſs. O man art thou then unjuſt only when there is queſtion of accuſing the wiſdom and the juſtice of thy God?

But I ſay farther, that were God even to operate in your heart that reliſh for, and thoſe feelings of ſalvation which you await, diſſolute and corrupted as you are, would you even feel the operation of his grace? Were he to call upon you, plunged as you are in pleaſures of a life altogether worldly, would you even hear his voice? Were he to touch your heart, would that feeling of grace have any conſequence for your converſion, extinguiſhed as it would immediately be by the ardour and the frenzy of profane paſſions? And, after all, this God of longanimity and of patience ſtill operateth in your heart; he ſtill poureth out within you the riches of his goodneſs and of his mercy. Ah! it is not his grace which fails you, but you receive it into a heart ſo full of corruption and wretchedneſs, that

it is ineffectual, it excites no feeling there of contrition; it is a ſpark which, falling into a ſink of filth and of naſtineſs, is extinguiſhed the moment it falls.

Reflect then, my dear hearer, and comprehend all the injuſtice of your pretexts. You complain that God is wanting to you, and that you await his grace to be converted; but is there a ſinner in whoſe mouth that complaint would be more unjuſt than from your lips? The Lord had anticipated you from your birth with his bleſſings; he had placed in you an happy diſpoſition, a noble ſpirit, and all the inclinations moſt favourable to virtue; he had even provided for you, in the boſom of a family, domeſtic ſuccours, and pious and godly examples. The mercies of the Lord went ſtill farther; he hath preſerved you from a thouſand dangers; through his goodneſs you have outlived occaſions where your friends, and perhaps the accomplices of your debaucheries, have fallen a ſacrifice to the ſcourge of war. To recal you to him, he hath ſpared neither afflictions, diſguſts, nor diſgraces; he hath torn from you the criminal objects of your paſſions, even at the moment when your heart was moſt ſtrongly attached to them; he hath ſo mercifully conducted your deſtiny, that a thouſand obſtacles have continually thwarted your paſſions, that you have never been able to arrive at the accompliſhment of all your criminal wiſhes, and that ſomething has always been wanting to your iniquitous happineſs; he hath formed for you ſerious engagements and duties, which, in ſpite of yourſelf, have impoſed the obligation of a prudent and regular life in the eyes of men; he hath not permitted your conſcience to become hardened in iniquity, and you have never been able to ſucceed in calming your remorſes, or in living tranquilly in guilt; not a day hath paſt in which you have not felt the emptineſs of the world

world and the horror of your ſituation; amidſt all your pleaſures and exceſſes, conſcience hath awoke, and you have never ſucceeded in lulling your ſecret diſquiets but by promiſing to yourſelf a future change. A juſt and merciful God urges and purſues you every where, ever ſince you have forſaken him; he hath affixed himſelf to you, ſaid a prophet, like a worm which burrows in the veſtment continually to gnaw your heart, and to render the importunity of his biting, a wholeſome importunity to his ſoul. Even while I am now ſpeaking to you, he worketh within you, filleth my mouth with theſe holy truths and placeth me here to proclaim them to you, for the ſole purpoſe of recalling perhaps you alone. What then is your whole life but one continued ſucceſſion of favours? Who are you yourſelf but a child of dilection, and the work of God's mercies? Unjuſt that thou art! And thou dareſt after this, to complain that his grace is wanting, thou, on whom alone on the earth the Lord ſeemeth to caſt his regards; thou, in whoſe heart he ſo continually operateth, as though of all men, he had only thee to ſave; thou, in a word whoſe every moment is a freſh grace, and whoſe greateſt guilt ſhall one day be, that of having received too many, and of having conſtantly abuſed them.

But to finiſh your overthrow, upon what grounds do you ſay that you want grace? You doubtleſs ſay ſo, becauſe you feel that in your preſent ſtate converſion would require too many ſacrifices; but you then believe that, with grace, you are converted without any ſacrifice on your part, without any ſelf-denial, and almoſt without being ſenſible of it yourſelf? You believe, then, that to have grace is to have no more paſſions to conquer, no more charms to break, no more temptations to overcome; that it is to be regenerated through penitence, without tears, pain,

pain, or ſorrow? Ah! I aſſure you that on this footing you will never poſſeſs that chimerical grace; for converſion muſt always require many ſacrifices; be the grace what it may, you will always be required to make heroical efforts, to repreſs your paſſions, to tear yourſelf from the moſt beloved objects, and to ſacrifice every thing which may captivate you. Look around, and ſee if no ſacrifices are required of thoſe who are daily returning to their God; yet they are favoured with grace, ſince it is it which delivers them and changes their heart. Inquire at them if grace render every thing eaſy and ſmooth; if it leave nothing more for ſelf-love to undergo. Aſk at them if they have not had a thouſand ſtruggles to ſuſtain, a thouſand obſtacles to overcome, a thouſand paſſions to moderate; and you will know if to have grace to be converted without any exertion on your part. Converſion is therefore a painful ſacrifice, a laborious baptiſm, a grievous delivery, a victory which ſuppoſes combats and fatigues. Grace, I confeſs, ſoftens them all; but it by no means operates ſo as to leave nothing more to overcome; and if, in order to change your life, you await a grace of that nature, I declare to you that ſuch never exiſted, and that ſo abſurdly to await your ſalvation and deliverance, is to be abſolutely bent upon periſhing.

But if the pretext of the default of grace be unjuſt on the ſide of the ſinner who alledges it, it is not leſs raſh and ungrateful with regard to God, on whom he pretends to fix the blame.

For you ſay that God is the maſter, and that, when he ſhall want you, he will perfectly know how to find you; that is to ſay, that you have only to leave him ſolely to act, and that, without giving yourſelf any trouble with reſpect

to

to your ſalvation, he, when ſo inclined, will know how to change your heart; that is to ſay, that you have only to paſs your life in pleaſures and in guilt, and that without any interference on your part, without your beſtowing even a thought upon it, without bringing to that converſion which you expect, other preparation than a whole life of debauchery and conſtant oppoſition to his grace, he will know how to acquire you, when his moment ſhall be come; that is to ſay, that your ſalvation, that grand, that only buſineſs which you have upon the earth, is no longer a concern of yours; and that the Lord, who hath given you that alone to manage, who hath commanded you to give it the preference over all others, and even to neglect every other in order to devote yourſelf to it alone, hath nevertheleſs abſolutely diſcharged you from the truſt, in order to take it wholly upon himſelf. Shew us then this promiſe in ſome new goſpel; for you well know, that it is no where to be found in that of Jeſus Chriſt. "The ſinner," ſays the prophet Iſaiah, "hath nothing but fooliſh things "wherewith to juſtify himſelf; and his heart worketh ini- "quity, to practiſe hypocriſy, and to utter error againſt "the Lord."

Laſtly, this pretext is fooliſh in itſelf; for you ſay that you want grace: I have already replied, that you deceive yourſelf; that, if candid, you will acknowledge that grace hath never been wanting to you; that you have more than once felt its ſalutary impreſſions; that, had ſo obſtinate a reſiſtance not been oppoſed by your hardneſs of heart and impenitence, it would have triumphed over your paſſions; that God, who wiſheth all men to be ſaved, who out of nothing hath drawn reaſonable beings, ſolely to praiſe, to bleſs, and to glorify him; in a word, who hath only made us for himſelf, hath opened to you, my dear hearer, as well

as

as to ſo many other ſinners, a thouſand ways of converſion, which would have infallibly recalled you ere now to the right path, had you not obſtinately ſhut your ears againſt his voice. You want grace, you ſay: well! what do you thereby pretend? Would it be to have it underſtood, that God who is our Father, and of whom we are the children; who hath an affection for us infinitely ſurpaſſing that of the tendereſt mother for an only ſon, that a God ſo good leave us, through want of aſſiſtance, in the actual impoſſibility of well-doing? But do you reflect that ſuch language would be a blaſphemy againſt the wiſdom of God, and the juſtification of every crime? Are you then ignorant, that whatever be the blow given to our liberty by the fall of our firſt parent, it is ſtill however left to us; that neither law nor duties would longer be impoſed upon man, had he not the real and actual power of fulfilling them; that religion, far from being an aid and a conſolation, would conſequently be no longer but a vexation and a ſnare; that if, notwithſtanding all the cares which God hath for our ſalvation, we periſh, it is always the fault of our own will, not the default of grace; that we are individually the authors of our miſery and deſtruction; that it hath depended upon ourſelves to have avoided them; and that a thouſand ſinners, with neither more grace nor ſuccours than we, have broken their chains, and have rendered glory to God and to his mercies, by a life altogether new.

But, granting that theſe truths were leſs certain, and that, in reality, you, my dear hearer, want grace, it would equally be true then, that God hath altogether forſaken you; that you are marked with a character of reprobation, and that your ſtate cannot be worſe. For to be without grace is ſurely the moſt terrible of all ſituations, and the moſt certain preſage of eternal condemnation.

And

And it is that horrible thought, however, which comforts you, which juſtifies in your eyes your tranquillity in guilt, which makes you, without trouble or remorſe, to delay your converſion, and which even ſerves as an excuſe for all your exceſſes; that is to ſay, that you are delighted in the want of this precious grace; that you continually ſay with ſatisfaction to yourſelf God wiſheth me not as yet; I have only to live, in the mean while, tranquilly in guilt; his grace will not come yet a while; that is to ſay, that you wiſh it not, and that you would even be ſorry were it to come to break thoſe chains which you ſtill love. To you, the want of grace ought to be the moſt fearful, and the moſt powerful inducement to extricate yourſelf from your deplorable ſtate; and it is the only one which quiets and ſtops you.

Beſides, the more you delay, the leſs will you have of grace; for the more you delay, the more do your crimes increaſe, the more doth God eſtrange himſelf from you; his mercies wear out, his moments of indulgence ſlip away, your meaſure becomes full, and the dreadful term of his wrath approaches: and if it be true that you have not at preſent ſufficient grace to be converted, you will not, in a little time, have wherewithal even to comprehend that you have occaſion either for penitence or converſion.

It is not grace then that you have to accuſe, it is yourſelf. Did Auguſtin, during his feeble deſires of converſion, tax the Lord with the delay of his penitence? Ah! he went no further for the reaſon of it, than in the weakneſs and the licentiouſneſs of his own heart. "I dragged on," ſaid he, "a heart diſeaſed and torn with remorſe, ac-
"cuſing myſelf alone for the evils, and for all the delays
"which

"which I ſtarted againſt a new life. I turned me in my "chains, as though they ſhould break off themſelves, with- "out any effort on my part. For thee, Lord, never haſt "thou ceaſed to chaſtiſe my heart with inward ſorrows, "continually operating there, through a merciful ſeverity, "the moſt pungent remorſes, which embittered every "comfort of my life. Nevertheleſs, the amuſements of the "world, which I had always and ſtill loved, withheld me; "they ſecretly whiſpered to me, Thou meaneſt, then, to "renounce every pleaſure? From this moment, then, "thou biddeſt an eternal farewell to all that hath hitherto ren- "dered life agreeable to thee? What! Shall it no more be "permitted to thee to ſee thoſe perſons who have been ſo "dear to thee; thou ſhalt henceforth be ſeparated from "thy companions in pleaſure, be baniſhed from their aſ- "ſemblies, and be obliged to deny thyſelf the moſt inno- "cent delights and all the comforts of ſociety? And is it "poſſible that thou canſt believe thyſelf capable of ſup- "porting the ſad wearineſs of a life ſo gloomy, ſo void, "ſo uniform, and ſo different from the one thou haſt hither- "to led?"

Behold where this half-contrite ſinner found the reaſons of his delays and of his reſiſtance; it was the dread of having to renounce his paſſions, and of being unable to ſupport the ſtep of a new life, and not any default of grace: and ſuch is preciſely the ſituation in which you are, and what you ſay every day to yourſelf.

For, after all, ſuppoſing that grace is wanting to you, what do you thence conclude? That the crimes into which you continually plunge yourſelf will not condemn you ſhould death ſurpriſe you in that deplorable ſtate? You would not dare to ſay ſo. That you have only to live

tranquil

tranquil in your debaucheries till God ſhall touch you, and till grace ſhall be given to you? But it is the height of folly to expect grace, while you render yourſelf every day more and more unworthy of it. That you are not guilty before God of the delay of your converſion, ſeeing it depends not on you? But all delaying ſinners who die impenitent would then be juſtified, and hell would no longer be but for the juſt who are converted. That you ought no more to concern yourſelf with your ſalvation, but to leave it to chance, without giving yourſelf any uneaſineſs or trouble with regard to it? But that is the party of deſpair and of impiety. That the moment of your converſion is marked, and that a little more or leſs of debauchery will neither advance nor retard it an inſtant? But, according to that doctrine, you have only to pierce your heart or plunge yourſelf into the waves, under the pretext that the moment of your death is determined, and that ſuch madneſs will neither haſten nor retard it a ſingle inſtant. "O "man!" cries the apoſtle in replying to the folly and to the impiety of this pretext, "is it thus that thou con-"temneſt the riches of the goodneſs of thy God? Art "thou ignorant that his patience in ſuffering thy debauche-"ries, far from authoriſing them, ought to recal thee to pe-"nitence; and, nevertheleſs, it is his long-forbearance "itſelf which hardens thee in guilt; and through thine "obſtinacy of heart thou amaſſeſt an overflowing treaſure "of wrath for that terrible day which ſhall ſurpriſe thee, and "on which ſhall be rendered to every one according to "his works?"

The only rational conſequence, therefore, that you could be permitted to draw, ſuppoſing that grace is wanting to you, is, that you, more earneſtly than any other, ought to pray to obtain it; to neglect nothing to ſoften an

irritated God, who hath withdrawn himſelf from your heart; to overcome by your importunities his reſiſtance; to remove, in the mean while, whatever removes his grace from your heart; to make ſtraight the way for him; to throw aſide all the obſtacles which have hitherto rendered it ineffectual to you; to deny yourſelf every opportunity in which your innocence almoſt always finds new rocks, and which completely ſhut your heart againſt the holy inſpirations: ſuch is the Chriſtian and prudent manner of rendering glory to God, of confeſſing that he alone is the maſter of hearts, and that every bleſſing and gift proceed from him. But to ſay, as you continually do, without changing in any reſpect your diſorderly manners, "When "God ſhall want me he knoweth how to find me," is to ſay, "I wiſh him not as yet; I have no occaſion for him, "I live happy and contented: when he ſhall force me, "and I can no longer avoid him, then I will yield; but, "in the mean time, I will enjoy my proſperity and the pri-"vilege which he granteth to me of delaying my converſion." What a ſhocking preparation for that precious grace which changeth the heart! Such is, however, all that an impenitent ſoul can adduce for confidently awaiting it.

Such are the pretexts which the ſinner who delays his converſion draws from the part of God. Let us now examine thoſe which he takes from within himſelf.

PART II. It is aſtoniſhing, my brethren, that, life being ſo ſhort, the moment of death ſo uncertain, every inſtant ſo precious, converſions ſo rare, the examples of thoſe who are taken unawares ſo frequent, and futurity ſo awful, ſo many frivolous pretexts can be urged for delaying a change of life. In all other dangers which threaten either our life, our honour or our property, the precautions

tions are prompt and ready, the danger alone is dubious and diſtant; here the danger is certain and preſent, and the precautions are always uncertain and remote. It ſeems either that ſalvation is an arbitrary thing, or that our life is in our own hands, or that the time for our penitence hath been promiſed to us, or that to die impenitent is no great misfortune, ſo ſtrongly do all ſinners lull themſelves in this hope of being one day converted without ever attempting a change of life. And what is ſtill more incomprehenſible in the delay of their penitence is, that they all admit of the neceſſity of their converſion, of the bad ſtate of their conſcience, and that they all conſider as the worſt of evils, that of dying in that fatal ſtate; and, nevertheleſs, that they all defer withdrawing from it under pretexts ſo childiſh, that even the gravity of the Chriſtian pulpit ſuffers in refuting and overthrowing them.

Age, the paſſions, the conſequences of a change of life, which they dread the being able to ſupport; ſuch are the vain pretexts inwardly alledged for delaying that converſion which God demands of us.

I ſay, in the firſt place, the age. They wiſh to allow the years of youth to paſs away, to which a party ſo important as that of piety ſeems little ſuited; they wait a certain ſeaſon of life when, the bloom of youth effaced, the manners become more ſedate, the attention more exact, the world leſs watchful upon us, even the mind riper and more capable of ſupporting that grand undertaking, they promiſe themſelves to labour at it, and that they will not then allow any thing to divert them from it.

But it would be natural to aſk you firſt, who hath told you that you ſhall arrive at the term which you mark to yourſelf;

yourſelf; that death ſhall not ſurpriſe you in the courſe of thoſe years which you ſtill allot to the world and to the paſſions; and that the Lord, whom you do not expect till the evening, ſhall not arrive in the morning, and when you leaſt think of it? Is youth a certain ſafeguard againſt death? See, without mentioning here what heppens every day to the reſt of men, if, even in confining yourſelf to the ſmall number of your friends and of your relations, you ſhall find none for whom the juſtice of God hath dug a grave in the firſt years of their courſe; who, like the flower of the field blooming to the morn, have withered before the cloſe of day, and have left you only the melancholy regret of ſeeing ſo ſpeedily blaſted, a life of which the bloſſoms had promiſed ſo fair. Fool! Thy ſoul is to be redemanded perhaps at the opening of thy race; and thoſe projects of converſion, which thou deferreſt to a future period, what ſhall they avail thee? And thoſe grand reſolutions which thou promiſeſt to thyſelf to put in execution one day, what ſhall they change in thine eternal miſery, ſhould death anticipate them, as it every day doth in a thouſand inſtances, and leave the only the unavailing regret of having vainly formed them?

But, even granting that death ſhall not take you unawares, and I aſk you, upon what foundation do you promiſe yourſelf, that age ſhall change your heart, and incline you more than you are at preſent to a new life? Did age change the heart of Solomon? Ah! It was then that his paſſions roſe to the higheſt, and that his ſhameful frailty no longer knew any bounds. Did age prepare Saul for his converſion? Ah! It was then that, to his paſt errors, he added ſuperſtition, impiety, hardneſs of heart, and deſpair. Perhaps in advancing in age you ſhall leave off certain looſe manners, becauſe the diſguſt alone which follows them

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ſhall have withdrawn you from them; but you will not thereby be converted: You will no longer live in debauchery; but you will not repent, you will not do penance, your heart will not be changed: You will ſtill be worldly, ambitious, voluptuous, and ſenſual: You will live tranquil in that ſtate, becauſe you will no longer have but all the diſpoſitions of theſe vices, without giving yourſelf up to their exceſſes. Years, examples, long habit of the world, ſhall have ſerved only to harden your conſcience, to ſubſtitute indolence and a worldly wiſdom in the room of the paſſions, and to efface that ſenſe of religion, which, in the youthful period of life, is left in the ſoul as yet fearful and timorous; you will die impenitent.

And if you ſuppoſe this to be merely a movement of zeal, and not a truth founded on experience, examine what paſſes every day before you; view all the ſouls who have grown old in the world, and who, through age alone, have withdrawn from its pleaſures; the love of the world is extinguiſhed only with them: under different exteriors, and which are changed ſolely through decency, you ſee the ſame reliſh for the world, the ſame inclinations, the ſame ardor for pleaſures, a youthful heart in a changed and worn out body. The delights of our younger years are recalled with ſatisfaction; the imagination dwells upon, and delights in reviving all that time and age have wreſted from us; a blooming youth and all its attendant amuſements, are regarded with envy; all of them are entered into which can be thought in any degree compatible with the ſedateneſs proper to advanced age; pretexts are formed for ſtill mingling in certain pleaſures with decency, and without being expoſed to the public ridicule. Laſtly, in proportion as the world flies from and deſerts us, it is purſued with more reliſh than ever; the long habit of it

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hath ſerved only to render it more neceſſary to us, and to render us incapable of doing without it; and age hath never as yet been the cauſe of converſion.

But even admitting that this misfortune were not to be dreaded, the Lord, is he not the God of all times and of all ages? Is there a ſingle one of our days which belongs not to him, and which he hath left to us for the world and for vanity? Is he not even jealous of the firſt-fruits of our heart and of our life, figured by thoſe firſt-fruits of the earth, which were commanded by the law to be offered up to him? Why they would you retrench from him the faireſt portion of your years to conſecrate it to Satan and to his works? Is life too long to be wholly employed for the glory of the Lord who hath given it to us, and who promiſeth to us an eternal one? Is youth too precious to be conſecrated towards becoming worthy of the eternal poſſeſſion of the Supreme Being? You reſerve then, for him, only the remains and the dregs of your paſſions and life? And it preciſely is, as if you ſaid to him, Lord, ſo long as I ſhall be fit for the world and its pleaſures, think not that I ſhall turn towards or ſeek thee; ſo long as the world ſhall be pleaſed with me, I can never think of devoting myſelf to thee; afterwards, indeed, when it ſhall begin to neglect and to forſake me, then I will turn me towards thee; I will ſay to thee, "Lo, I am here! I will pray thee "to accept a heart which the world hath rejected, and "which reluctantly finds itſelf under the hard neceſſity of "beſtowing itſelf on thee; but till then, expect nothing "from me but perfect indifference, and a thorough neglect: "after all, thou art only entitled to our ſervices when we "ourſelves are good for nothing elſe; we are always ſure, "at leaſt, of finding thee; all times are the ſame to thee; "but, after a certain ſeaſon of life, we are unfitted for the world,

" world, and, while yet time, it is proper to enjoy it be-
" fore it deſerts us." Soul unworthy of ever confeſſing the mercies of a God whom you treat with ſuch inſult! And do you believe that he will then accept of an homage ſo forced, and ſo diſgraceful to his glory, he, who taketh no delight but in the voluntary ſacrifices, he, who hath no need of man, and who favoureth him when he deigneth to accept even his pureſt vows, and his ſincereſt homages?

The prophet Iſaiah formerly mocked, in theſe terms, thoſe who worſhipped vain idols: " You take," ſaid he to them, " a cedar from Lebanon; you ſet apart the beſt and
" the handſomeſt parts of it for your occaſions, your plea-
" ſures, the luxury and ornament of your palaces; and
" when you know not how to employ otherwiſe the rem-
" nant, you carve it into a vain idol, and offer up to it
" ridiculous vows and homages." And I in my turn might ſay to you, you ſet apart from your life the faireſt and the moſt flouriſhing of your years, to indulge your fancies and your iniquitous paſſions; and when you know not to what purpoſe to devote the remainder, and it becomes uſeleſs to the world and to pleaſures, then you make an idol of it; you make it ſerve for religion; you form to yourſelf of it, a falſe, ſuperficial, and inanimate virtue, to which you reluctantly conſecrate the wretched remains of your paſſions and of your debaucheries. O my God! is this then regarding thee as a jealous God, whom the ſlighteſt ſtain in the pureſt offerings wounds and offends, or as a vain idol, which feels not the indignity and the hypocriſy of the homages offered up to it?

Yes, my brethren, nothing can be reaped in an advanced age but what has been ſown in the younger years of life.

life. If you ſow in corruption, ſaid the apoſtle, you will cut down in corruption: you are continually ſaying yourſelves that we always die as we have lived; that the character and diſpoſition change not; that we bear within us in old age all the defects and all the tendencies of our younger years; and that nothing is ſo fortunate for us as to have formed laudable inclinations from an early period, and, as the prophet ſaid, to have accuſtomed ourſelves from the tendereſt youth to bear the yoke of the Lord.

And, in effect, when we ſhould attend ſolely to the quiet of your life; when we ſhould have no other intereſt in view than that of ſecuring peaceful and happy days to ourſelves here below, what happineſs to anticipate, and to ſtifle in their birth, by bending from the firſt towards virtue, ſo many violent paſſions which afterwards tear the heart and occaſion all the ſorrows and miſery of our life. What happineſs, to have grafted in ourſelves only gentle and innocent ideas, to ſpare ourſelves the fatal experience of ſo many criminal pleaſures, which for ever corrupt the heart, defile the imagination, engender a thouſand ſhameful and unruly fancies, which accompany us even in virtue, outlive our crimes, and frequently become new ones themſelves! What happineſs, to have created innocent and tranquil pleaſures for ourſelves in theſe younger years, to have accuſtomed the heart to be contented with them, not to have contracted the ſad neceſſity of being unable to do without violent and criminal gratifications, and not to have rendered inſupportable, by a long habit of warm and tumultuous paſſions, the gentleneſs and the tranquillity of virtue and of innocence! How theſe younger years, paſſed in modeſty and in horror at vice, attract bleſſings on the remainder of life! How attentive to all our ways do they render the Lord! And how much do they render us the well-

well-beloved object of his cares and of his paternal kindneſs!

But nobody denies, you will ſay, the happineſs of being early devoted to God, and of having been able to reſiſt all the temptations of youth and of pleaſure. But that ſuch is not your caſe; you have followed the common tract; the torrent of the world and of the paſſions has ſwept all before it; you find yourſelves, even ſtill, under engagements too intimate and powerful to think of breaking them; you wait a more favourable ſituation; and you promiſe yourſelves, that, when the paſſion which now enſlaves you ſhall be extinguiſhed, you will never again enter into new bonds, but will heartily range yourſelves on the ſide of duty and of virtue. Second pretext; the paſſions and the engagements from which it is impoſſible, as yet, to withdraw.

But, in the firſt place, are you quite certain that this more favourable ſituation which you await, in order to return to God, ſhall arrive? Who hath revealed to you the courſe and the duration of the paſſions which at preſent retain you? Who hath marked limits to them and ſaid, like the Lord to the troubled waters, "Hitherto ſhalt thou "come, and no farther?" When ſhall they have an end, do you know? Can you take upon you to ſay that they ſhall one day be terminated? That they ſhall be ended at leaſt before yourſelf? Would you be the firſt ſinner ſurpriſed in his deplorable paſſions? Do not almoſt all around you die in that melancholy ſtate? Do the miniſters called in to the aſſiſtance of the dying, find many ſinners on the bed of death who, for a length of time, have quitted their former habits in order to prepare themſelves for that laſt moment? What do we find there but ſouls ſtill bound with a

thouſand chains, which death alone ſhall break aſunder? But inexplicable conſciences, if I may venture to ſay ſo, and ſtill enveloped in the chaos of a life wholly diſſolute? What indeed do we expect on theſe occaſions but unavailing regrets on that dreadful ſurpriſal, and vain proteſtations of the different meaſures they would have adopted, had they been able to have foreſeen it? What are the uſual offices of our miniſtry in theſe laſt moments? To enlighten conſciences which ought then to need only conſolation; to aſſiſt them in recalling crimes which we ſhould then have only to exhort them to forget; to make the dying ſinner ſenſible of his debaucheries, we who ſhould then have to ſupport and to animate him with the remembrance of his virtues; in a word, to open the dark concealments of his heart, we who ſhould then have to open only the boſom of Abraham and the treaſures of an immortal glory for the ſoul on the point of diſengaging itſelf from the body. Such are the melancholy offices which we ſhall one day perhaps have to render to you; you, in your turn, will call upon us, and, in place of a ſoothing converſation with you on the advantages which an holy death promiſes to the believer, we ſhall then be ſolely employed in receiving the narration of the crimes of your life.

But, ſhould your paſſions not extend even to that laſt hour, the more you delay, the deeper do you allow the roots of guilt to become, the more do your chains form new folds round your heart, the more does that leven of corruption which you carry within you, ſpread itſelf, ferment, and corrupt all the capacity of your ſoul. Judge of this by the progreſs which the paſſion hath hitherto made in your heart. At firſt it was only timid liberties, and, to quiet yourſelf in which, you ſtill ſought ſome ſhadow of innocence: afterwards, it was only dubious actions, in which

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it was ſtill difficult to diſtinguiſh guilt from a venial treſpaſs: licentiouſneſs cloſely followed; but ſtriking exceſſes were ſtill rare: you reproached yourſelf in the very moment of their commiſſion: you were unable to bear them long upon a conſcience ſtill alarmed at its ſtate: the backſlidings are inſenſibly multiplied: licentiouſneſs is become a fixed and habitual ſtate: conſcience hath no longer but feebly cried out againſt the empire of the paſſion: guilt is become neceſſary to you: it hath no longer excited remorſe: you have ſwallowed it like water, which paſſes unfelt, and without tickling the palate by any particular flavour. The more you advance, the more does the venom gain; the weaker does any reſidue of ſtrength, which modeſty, reaſon, and grace had placed in you, become; the more what was yet wholeſome in your ſoul becomes infected and defiled. What folly, then, to allow wounds to become old and corrupted, under pretence that they will afterwards be more eaſily cured! And what do you in delaying, but render your evils more incurable, and take away from the hope of your converſion, every reſource which might ſtill be left to you!

You perhaps flatter yourſelf that there are no laſting paſſions, and that, ſooner or later, time and diſguſt ſhall withdraw you from them.

To this I anſwer, 1*ſtly*, That, in all probability, you ſhall indeed become tired of the objects which at preſent enſlave you, but that your paſſions ſhall not be conſequently ended. You will doubtleſs form new ties, but you will not form to yourſelf a new heart. There are no eternal paſſions I confeſs; but corruption and licentiouſneſs are almoſt always ſo: the paſſions which are terminated ſolely by diſguſt, always leave the heart open for the reception of

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ſome other; and it is commonly a new fire which expels and extinguiſhes the firſt. Call to your remembrance what has hitherto happened to you: You firmly thought that, were ſuch an engagement once at an end, you ſhould then be free, and wholly at liberty to return to your God; you fixed upon that happy moment as the term for your penitence; that engagement hath been terminated; death, inconſtancy, diſguſt, or ſome other accident hath broken it; and, nevertheleſs, you are not converted: new opportunities have offered, you have formed new ties, you have forgotten your former reſolutions, and your laſt ſtate is become worſe than the firſt. The paſſions which are not extinguiſhed by grace, ſerve merely to light up and to prepare the heart for new ones.

I anſwer, *2dly*, When all your criminal engagements ſhould even be ended, and that no particular object ſhould intereſt your heart; if time and diſguſt alone have effected this, yet will not your converſion be more advanced. You will ſtill hold to all, in no longer holding to any thing; you will find yourſelf in a certain vague ſtate of indolence and of inſenſibility, more removed from the kingdom of God than even the ardour of mad paſſions; your heart, free from any particular paſſion, will be as if filled with an univerſal paſſion; if I may ſpeak in this manner, with an immenſe void which will wholly occupy it. It will even be ſo much the more difficult for you to quit this ſtate, as you will have nothing ſufficiently ſtriking to catch at. You will find yourſelf without vigour, taſte, or any inclination for ſalvation; it is a calm from which you will find it more difficult to extricate yourſelf than even from the tempeſt; for the ſame winds which cauſe the ſtorm, may ſometimes drive us fortunately into port; but the greater the calm is, the more certainly it leads to deſtruction.

But

But, *laſtly*, you ſay, We would willingly change and adopt the party of a more reaſonable, and more Chriſtian life; we feel the emptineſs of the world and of all its pleaſures; we enter into amuſements, and into a certain diſſipation, without reliſh, and as if with regret; we would wiſh to renounce them, and ſeriouſly to labour towards our ſalvation: but this firſt ſtep ſtartles us; it is a matter of notoriety which engages us towards the public, and which we have many doubts of being able to ſupport; we are of a rank which renders the ſmalleſt change conſpicuous; and we are afraid leſt, like ſo many others, we act a part that will not be laſting, and, conſequently, will leave us only the ridicule without the merit of devotion.

You dread, my dear hearer, the being able to go through with it? What! in delaying your converſion you promiſe yourſelf that God ſhall one day touch you; and, in being converted at preſent, you dare not promiſe yourſelf that he will ſuſtain you? You depend upon his mercies while inſulting him, and you dare not truſt to them when glorifying him? You believe that you have nothing to riſk, on his part, in continuing to offend him, and you have no confidence in him when beginning to ſerve him? O man! where is here that reaſon, and that rectitude of judgment which thou vaunteſt ſo much? And muſt it be that, in the buſineſs of thy ſalvation alone, thou art a ſink of contradiction, and an incomprehenſible paradox?

Beſides, might we not with reaſon ſay to you, make a beginning at leaſt; try if, in effect, you ſhall be unable to ſuſtain yourſelf in the ſervice of God? Is it not worth the trouble of being tried? Does a man, precipitated by the tempeſt into the ſea, and who finds himſelf on the point of drowning, not ſtrain every nerve, in the firſt place,

place, to gain the ſhore by ſwimming, before he reſigns himſelf up to the mercy of the waves? Would he ſay to himſelf, as an excuſe for making no effort to ſave himſelf, "I ſhall perhaps be unable to go through with it; my "ſtrength will moſt likely fail me by the way?" Ah! he tries, he makes every effort, he ſtruggles againſt the danger, he labours to the laſt moment of his ſtrength, and only gives way, at laſt, when, overpowered by the violence of the waves, he is forced to yield to the evil of his deſtiny. You periſh, my dear hearer; the waves gain upon you, the torrent ſweeps you away; and you heſitate whether you ſhall try to extricate yourſelf from the danger; and you waſte, in calculating your ſtrength, the only moments left to provide for your ſafety? And you ſacrifice, in deliberating, the little time that is left to you for the ſole purpoſe of diſengaging yourſelf from the peril which is imminent, and in which ſo many others are continually periſhing before your eyes?

But, laſtly, even granting that in the end the various hardſhips of virtue tire out your weakneſs, and that you find yourſelf under the neceſſity of retreating; at any rate, you will always have paſſed ſome little time without offending your God; you will always have made ſome efforts towards appeaſing him; you will always have devoted ſome days to the praiſe of his holy name: at any rate, it will be a portion cut off from your criminal life, and from that treaſure of iniquity which you amaſs for the terrible day of vengeance; you will have acquired, at leaſt, the right of repreſenting your weakneſs to God, and of ſaying to him, "Lord, thou beholdeſt my deſires and my "weakneſs; why, O my God! have I not a heart more "conſtant to thee, more determined in the cauſe of truth, "more callous to the world, and more difficult to be led "aſtray?

" aſtray? Put an end, O Lord, to mine uncertainties and
" to mine inconſtancy; take from the world that dominion
" which it hath over my heart; reſume thine ancient
" rights over it, and no longer imperfectly attract me, leſt
" I again fly off from thee. I am covered with ſhame at the
" eternal variations of my life, and they make me that I am
" afraid to raiſe up mine eyes to thee, or to promiſe a con-
" ſtant fidelity. I have ſo often broken my promiſes after
" ſwearing to thee an eternal love, my weakneſs hath ſo
" often led me to forget the happineſs of that engagement,
" that I have no longer the courage to anſwer for myſelf.
" My heart betrays me every inſtant; and a thouſand
" times, on riſing from thy feet, and with mine eyes ſtill
" bathed in tears of ſorrow for having offended thee, an op-
" portunity hath ſeduced me; and the very ſame infideli-
" ties of which I had ſo lately expreſſed mine abhorrence,
" have found me, as formerly, weak and unfaithful: with
" an heart ſo light and ſo uncertain, what aſſurance, O my
" God! can I give to thee? And what indeed could I pre-
" ſume to promiſe to myſelf? I have ſo often thought that
" my reſolutions would now at laſt be conſtant; I have
" found myſelf in moments ſo lively and ſo affecting of grace
" and of compunction, and which ſeemed for ever to fix
" the durability of my fidelity, that I ſee nothing now
" which can either be capable of fixing me, or of affording
" me a hope of that ſtability in virtue which I have hither-
" to been unable to attain. Let the danger of my ſituation
" touch thee, O my God! the character of my heart diſ-
" courages and alarms me; I know that inconſtancy in
" thy ways is a preſage of perdition, and that the verſatile
" and changeable ſoul is curſed in thy holy books. But,
" while yet ſenſible of the holy inſpirations of thy grace,
" I will once more endeavour to enter into thy ways; and,

" if

" if I muſt periſh, I prefer being loſt while exerting my-
" ſelf to return to thee, O my God! who permitteſt
" not the ſoul who ſincerely ſeeketh thee to periſh, and
" who art the only Lord worthy of being ſerved, to
" the ſhocking tranquillity of an avowed and determined
" rebellion, and to the melacholy idea of renouncing all
" hope of thoſe eternal riches which thou prepareſt for
" thoſe who ſhall have loved and ſerved thee."

SERMON

SERMON II.

ON FALSE TRUST.

LUKE xxiv. 21.

But we truſted that it had been he which ſhould have redeemed Iſrael.

IN vain had Jeſus Chriſt, during his mortal life, a thouſand times declared to his diſciples that it was flattering themſelves to count upon a reward which had not been merited by croſſes and toils; this truth, ſo little agreeable to nature, had never been willingly received; and all the times that the Saviour had tried to undecieve them on the oppoſite error, they heard not that word of the goſpel, and it was not ſeen by them. Such is ſtill at preſent, the diſpoſition of the two diſciples to whom Jeſus Chriſt condeſcends to appear, in their way to Emmaus; they expected that their Maſter ſhould deliver Iſrael from the yoke of nations, and ſhould cauſe them to be ſeated on twelve earthly thrones, without any exertion being neceſſary on their part in order to mount them; without the Saviour himſelf having occaſion to ſuffer in order to triumph over his enemies.

Beſides the miſtake which led them to conſider Jeſus Chriſt as a temporal deliverer, I likewiſe obſerve another

which appears to me not leſs dangerous in them, but which at preſent is more common among us; it is that falſe truſt by which they are perſuaded that, without co-operating towards it themſelves, and leaving to Jeſus Chriſt the whole management of their deliverance, they ſhall receive the fulfilment of the magnificent promiſes which, in his converſations with them upon the earth, he had ſo often reiterated. Now, my brethren, this falſe truſt, which makes all to be expected by ſinners from grace alone, without any co-operation on their part, and the reward of the holy to be hoped although they labour not towards meriting it; this falſe truſt, which always reckons upon the goodneſs of God whom it offends, which, without combatting, promiſes itſelf to be crowned, and which always hopes againſt probability; this falſe truſt which is unwilling to purchaſe heaven and yet expects it, is the moſt univerſal and eſtabliſhed religion among Chriſtians; and when Jeſus Chriſt ſhall once more appear upon the earth, he will find many of his unbelieving diſciples who ſhall have occaſion to ſay to him, "we truſted."

This, my brethren, is what induces me to occupy your time at preſent upon ſo important a matter, perſuaded that a falſe truſt is the ſource of condemnation to almoſt all ſinners; that thoſe who are afraid of periſhing, never periſh; and that I could not better fulfil my miniſtry, than by eſtabliſhing in your hearts thoſe ſalutary feelings of miſtruſt which lead to precautions and to remedies, and which, in diſturbing the peace of ſin, leave, in its place, the peace of Jeſus Chriſt, which ſurpaſſeth all feeling. Thus, in order to give a proper extenſion to ſo uſeful a ſubject, I reduce it into two propoſitions: there is no diſpoſition more fooliſh than that of the ſinner who preſumes, without labouring towards his amendment, is the firſt: there is none

more

more injurious to God, is the ſecond. The folly of a falſe truſt; the inſult of a falſe truſt: let us explain theſe two truths.

PART I. I am not afraid of openly agreeing with you, my brethren, that the mercies of the Lord are always more abundant than our wickedneſſes, and that his goodneſs may furniſh legitimate motives of truſt to all ſinners. The doctrine which I go to eſtabliſh is ſufficiently terrible, without adding to it new terrors by concealing part of thoſe truths which may tend to ſoften it; and if caution be required in this matter, it is rather in not bringing forward all that might alarm the conſcience, than in concealing what might tend to conſole it.

It is true, that every where the holy books give us magnificent and ſoothing ideas of the goodneſs of God. One while he is a mild and long-forbearing Maſter, who awaits the penitence of the ſinner; who covers the ſins of men, in order to lead them to repentance; who is ſilent and quiet, who is ſlow to puniſh, and delays in order that he may be prevented, who threatens in order to be diſarmed: another while he is a tender Friend, who is never weary of knocking at the gate of the heart, who flatters, intreats, and ſolicits us, and who, in order to draw us to himſelf, employs every thing which an ingenious love can invent, to recal a rebellious heart: again, and laſtly, for all would never be ſaid, he is an indefatigable Shepherd, who goes, even through the wildeſt mountains, in ſearch of his ſtrayed ſheep; and, having at laſt found it, places it upon his ſhoulders, and is ſo tranſported with joy, that even the celeſtial harmony are ordered to celebrate its happy return. It muſt ſurely be confeſſed, that the comfort and the conſolation of theſe images can receive no addition; and every

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ſinner who, after this, deſpairs, or even gives way to deſpondency, is the moſt fooliſh of all men. But do not from thence conclude that the ſinner, who preſumes, is leſs fooliſh, or that the mercy of the Lord can be a legitimate foundation of truſt to thoſe who are continually deſiring their converſion, and yet, without labouring towards that great work, promiſe every thing to themſelves from a goodneſs which their very confidence inſults. To convince you of this, before I enter into the main points of my ſubject, remark, I beg of you, that, among that innumerable crowd of ſinners, of every deſcription, with which the world is filled, there is not one who hath not hopes of his converſion; not one who, before hand, conſiders himſelf as a child of wrath, and doomed to periſh; not one who doth not flatter himſelf, that, at laſt, the Lord ſhall one day have pity upon him: the lewd, the ambitious, the worldly, the revengeful, the unjuſt, all hope, yet no one repents. Now I mean, at preſent, to prove to you, that this diſpoſition of falſe truſt is, of all others in which the creature can be, the moſt fooliſh: follow, I beg of you, my reaſons; they appear worthy of your attention.

In effect, when, in order to make the folly of falſe truſt apparent, I ſhould have only the uncertainty in which a ſinner who hath loſt the ſanctifying grace is of his ſalvation, no other argument would be required to juſtify my firſt propoſition. And, when I ſpeak of the uncertainty common to all believers, which occaſions, that no one can know whether he be worthy of love or of hatred; whether he ſhall perſevere even to the end, or fall never more to recover himſelf: terrible ſubject of dread, even for the moſt righteous! I ſpeak of a more ſhocking uncertainty, ſince it does not ſuppoſe in the ſinner in queſtion, a doubtful

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ſtate of righteouſneſs and chriſtian fears, upon backſlidings to come; but becauſe it is founded upon a certain ſtate of ſin, and upon a repentance which no body can guarantee to him.

Now, I ſay that it is the height of folly to preſume in this ſtate. For confeſs it, my dear hearer; inveterate ſinner as you are; abiding, as you tranquilly do in iniquitous paſſions, in the midſt even of all the ſolemnities of religion, and of all the terrors of the holy word, upon the fooliſh hope of one day at laſt quitting this deplorable ſtate; you cannot deny that it is at leaſt doubtful whether you ſhall retrieve yourſelf, or, even to the end, remain in your ſin. I even admit you to be full of good deſires; but you are not ignorant that deſires convert nobody, and that the greateſt ſinners are often thoſe who moſt long for their converſion. Now, the doubt here only equal, would you be prudent in remaining careleſs? What! In the frightful uncertainty whether you ſhall die in your irregularity, or if God ſhall withdraw you from it; floating, as I may ſay, betwixt heaven and hell; on the poiſe betwixt theſe two deſtinies, you could be indifferent on the deciſion? Hope is the ſweeteſt and the moſt flattering party; and for that reaſon you would incline to his ſide? Ah! my dear hearer, were there no other reaſon to be afraid than that of hoping, you would not be prudent to live in this profound calm.

But ſuch is not even your caſe; things are far indeed from being equal: in this ſhocking doubt which every ſinner may inwardly form: "Shall I expire in mine iniquity, "in the ſin in which I actually, and have ſo long lived? "or ſhall I not die in it?" the firſt part is infinitely the moſt probable.

For,

For, *1ſtly*, your own powers are not ſufficient to regain that ſanctity you have loſt; a foreign, ſupernatural, and heavenly aid is neceſſary, of which nobody can aſſure you; in place of which, you need only yourſelf to remain in your ſin: there is nothing in your nature which can reſuſcitate the grace loſt, no ſeed of ſalvation, no principle of ſpiritual life; and you bear in your heart a fatal ſource of corruption which may every day produce freſh fruits of death; it is more likely, therefore, that you ſhall die in your guilt, than it is, that you ſhall be converted.

2dly, Not only is a foreign and divine aid neceſſary, but alſo an aid uncommon, rare, denied to almoſt all ſinners, in ſhort a miracle for your converſion; for the converſion of the ſinner is one of the greateſt prodigies of grace, and you know yourſelf that ſuch inſtances are extremely rare in the world. Now and then, ſome fortunate ſoul whom God withdraweth from licentiouſneſs; but theſe are remarkable exertions of the divine mercy, and not in the common tract: in place of which, you have only to let things purſue their natural courſe, and you ſhall die ſuch as you are; God hath only to follow his ordinary laws, and your deſtruction is certain; the poſſibility of your ſalvation is founded ſolely on a ſingular effort of his power and mercy; the certitude of your condemnation is founded upon the commoneſt of all rules; in a word, that you periſh, is the ordinary lot of ſinners who reſemble you; that you are not converted, is a ſingularity of which there are few examples.

3dly, In order to continue in your preſent ſtate, you have only to follow your inclinations, to yield yourſelf up to yourſelf and quietly to allow yourſelf to be carried down the ſtream; to do this you have neither occaſion for effort

nor

nor violence: but to return, ah! you muſt break through inclinations fortified by time; you muſt hate and reſiſt yourſelf from the deareſt objects, break aſunder the tendereſt ties, make the moſt heroical efforts, you who are incapable of the commoneſt ones. Now I demand, if, in a matter to come, or in uncertain events, we ever augur in favour of thoſe who have moſt obſtacles to ſurmount, and moſt difficulties to ſtruggle againſt? Doth not the moſt eaſy always appear the moſt probable? Soften as much as you pleaſe this truth in your mind; view it in the moſt favourable lights; this propoſition on your eternal deſtiny is the moſt inconteſtible of the Chriſtian morality. It is beyond compariſon more certain that I ſhall never be converted, and that I ſhall die in my ſin, than that the Lord ſhould have pity upon me, and at laſt withdraw me from it: this is your ſituation: and, if you can ſtill be indifferent, and flatter yourſelf in ſuch a ſtate, your ſecurity my dear hearer, terrifies me.

But I go farther, and I entreat you to liſten to me. The ſinner who, without labouring to reclaim himſelf, aſſures himſelf of converſion, preſumes not only in a fearful uncertainty, and where every thing ſeems to conclude againſt him, but alſo in ſpite of the moral uncertainty, as we are taught by faith, that he is loſt. Here are my proofs, *1ſtly*, You expect that God ſhall convert you; but how do you expect it? By continually placing new obſtacles in the way of his grace; by rivetting your chains; by aggravating your yoke; by multiplying your crimes; by neglecting every opportunity of ſalvation which his ſolemnities, his myſteries, and even the terrors of his word offer to you; by always remaining in the ſame dangers; by changing nothing in your manners, your pleaſures, your intimacies, in ſhort, in every thing which continues to nouriſh,

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in your heart, that fatal paſſion from which you hope that grace ſhall deliver you. How! the fooliſh virgins are rejected, ſolely for having negligently and without fervour awaited the bridegroom; and you, faithleſs ſoul, who await him while completing the meaſure of your crimes, you dare to flatter yourſelf that you ſhall be more favourably treated?

2dly, Grace is accorded only to tears, to ſolicitations, to eager deſires; it requires to be long courted. Now do you pray? At leaſt, do you entreat? Do you imitate the importunity of the widow of the goſpel? Do you labour, like Cornelius the Gentile, to attract that grace by charities and other Chriſtian works? Do you ſay to the Lord, every day, with the prophet, "Hide not thy face "from me, O Lord, leſt I be like unto them that go down "into the pit?" Ah! you ſay to him, "Lord, thou wilt "draw me to thyſelf; in vain I reſiſt thee; thou wilt, at "laſt, break aſunder my chains; however great be the cor-"ruption of my heart, thou wilt ultimately change it." Fool! what more likely to repel a gift than the temerity which exacts it, and even in the very moment when moſt unworthy dares to claim it as a right! Freſh argument againſt you; grace is reſerved for the lowly and the fearful who dread being refuſed what is not owing to them: it is upon theſe ſouls that the Spirit of God relieth, and taketh delight in wording wonders; on the contrary, "he deſpi-"ſeth the preſumptuous ſinner, and knoweth him afar off."

3dly, The grace of converſion which you ſo confidently expect, is, as you know, the greateſt of all gifts. Nevertheleſs, as you know ſtill better, there is ſcarcely a ſinner more unworthy of it than yourſelf; unworthy through the nature of your diſorders, of which you alone know the

infamy

infamy and the enormity; unworthy through the lights and inſpirations you have a thouſand times miſuſed; unworthy through the favours of the myſteries and of the truths which you have always neglected; unworthy through the ſequel, even of your natural inclinations, which heaven, at your birth, had formed ſo happy and ſo tractable to truth, and which you have turned into melancholy means of vice; unworthy through the iniquitous deriſions which you have made of piety, and thoſe impious deſires, ſo injurious to the truth of God, which have a thouſand times led you to wiſh that all we ſay of a future ſtate were a fable; laſtly, unworthy through that profound ſecurity in which you live, which, before God, is the worſt of all your crimes. Now I aſk nothing here but equity; if only a ſingle ſinner were to be excluded from that grace of converſion which you expect, you would have every reaſon to dread that the excluſion fell upon you, and that you were to be that ſingle child of curſe, ſeparated as an anathemiſed from all his brethren! But, if almoſt all be deprived of that bleſſing, ah! my dear hearer, ought you to reckon upon it as ſecure? And what have you but a ſuperabundance of ſins to diſtinguiſh you from others? If the hope of the preſumptuous ſinner periſh in general with himſelf, can you ſuppoſe that your ſalvation ſhall be accompliſhed by the ſame way in which all others periſh? I know that we ought never to deſpair; but humble confidence is very different from preſumption: humble confidence, after having tried all, counts upon nothing; and you depend upon all without having ever tried any thing. Humble truſt conſiders the mercy of the Lord only as the ſupplement of the defects of penitence, and you make it the refuge of your crimes; humble truſt, with fear and trembling, awaits the pardon of thoſe faults it hath lamented, and you coolly expect that thoſe ſhall be forgiven

of which you never mean to repent. I know, and I again repeat, that we ought never to deſpair; but, were it poſſible that deſpair could be legitimate, ah! it would be when hope is preſuptuouſly encouraged.

But age will mellow the paſſions, ſays inwardly the ſinner here: enticing opportunities will not always come in the way; circumſtances more favourable for ſalvation will occur through time; and what is at preſent impoſſible, ſhall one day perhaps be done, when a thouſand actual impediments ſhall be removed. My God! in this manner doth the unfortunate ſoul deceive himſelf; and it is through an illuſion ſo palpable that the demon ſeduces almoſt all men, the wiſeſt as the moſt fooliſh, the moſt enlightened as the moſt credulous, the great as the common people. For ſay, my dear hearer, when you promiſe yourſelf that one day the Lord ſhall at laſt have pity upon you, you no doubt promiſe yourſelf that he will change your heart; now, why do you depend upon this change ſo neceſſary to your ſalvation, more in future than at preſent? In the firſt place, ſhall your diſpoſitions for penitence be then more favourable? Shall your heart find it eaſier to break aſunder its chains? What! Inclinations deeply rooted through time and years ſhall be more eaſily torn out? A torrent which will already have hollowed out its bed, ſhall be more eaſy to turn aſide? Are you in your ſenſes when you ſay ſo? Ah! even now it appears ſo difficult to repreſs your inordinate paſſions, though yet in their infancy, and conſequently more tractable and eaſy to regulate! You delay your converſion only becauſe it would coſt you too much to conquer yourſelf on certain points: how! you are perſuaded that it will coſt you leſs in the end; that this fatal plant, then become a tree, ſhall be more pliable; that this wound, inveterate and of longer

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ſtanding, ſhall be more eaſy to cure, and ſhall require leſs grievous remedies? you expect reſources and facilities towards penitence from time; it is time, my brethren, which will deprive you of all thoſe yet remaining.

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2*dly*; Shall grace be either more frequent in future, or more victorious? But granting it even to be ſo, your cupidity, then more powerful, oppoſing greater impediments, the grace which would now triumph over your heart, and change you into a thorough penitent, will no longer then, but ſlightly, agitate you, and excite within you only weak and unavailing deſires of penitence. But you have little reaſon to flatter yourſelf even with this hope: the more you irritate the goodneſs of God by delaying your converſion, the more will he withdraw himſelf from you: every moment diminiſhes in ſome meaſure his favours and his kindneſs. Recollect that, when you firſt began to deviate from his ways, not a day paſſed without his operating within you ſome movement of ſalvation, troubles, remorſes, and deſires of penitence. At preſent, if you attend to it, theſe inſpirations are more rare: it is only on certain occaſions that your conſcience is arouſed; you are partly familiariſed with your diſorders. Ah! my dear hearer, you eaſily ſee that your inſenſibility will only be increaſed in the ſequel: God will more and more retire from you, and will deliver up to a reprobate feeling, and to that fatal tranquillity which is the conſummation and the moſt dreadful puniſhment of iniquity. Now I aſk, are you not abſurd in thus marking out, for your converſion, a time in which you ſhall never have had fewer aids on the part of grace, and leſs facility on the part of your heart?

I might ſtill add, that the more you delay the more your accumulate debts, the more enrich the treaſure of iniquity; the

the more crimes you ſhall have to expiate, the more rigorous ſhall your reparation have to be, and, conſequently, the more ſhall your penitence be difficult. Slight auſterities, ſome retrenchments, ſome Chriſtian charities, would perhaps ſuffice, at preſent, to acquit you before your Judge, and to appeaſe his juſtice. But, in the ſequel, when the abundance of your crimes ſhall have riſen above your head, and time and years ſhall have blunted, if not totally deſtroyed, in your memory, the multitude and the flagrancy of your iniquities; ah! no reparation on your part ſhall then be ſufficiently rigorous, no mortification ſufficiently auſtere, no humiliation ſufficiently profound, no pleaſure, however innocent, which you muſt not deny yourſelf, no molification which will not be criminal: holy exceſſes of penitence will be neceſſary to compenſate the duration and the enormity of your crimes; it will require you to quit all, to tear yourſelf from every thing, to ſacrifice your fortune, intereſts, and conveniency; perhaps to condemn yourſelf to perpetual retreat; for it is only through theſe means that the great ſinners are recalled. Now, if ſlight rigours, which would at préſent be ſufficient amends, appear ſo inſupportable, and diſguſt you at the idea of a change, ſhall penitence be more alluring, when more toils and ſteps a thouſand times more bitter preſent themſelves in its train? My God! upon the affair of ſalvation alone it is that men are capable of ſuch wilful miſtakes. Ah! my brethren, of what avail are great lights, extent of genius, deep penetration, and ſolid judgment in the management of earthly matters, and of vain undertakings which ſhall periſh with us, if we are children in the grand work of eternity?

And allow me to conclude this part of my diſcourſe with a final reaſon, which, I truſt, will ſerve to convince you.

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You conſider the vain hope of a converſion as a feeling of grace and of ſalvation, and as a proof that the Lord viſiteth you, and that he hath not yet delivered you up to all the inveteracy of ſin. But, my dear hearer, the Lord cannot viſit you in his mercy without inſpiring you with ſalutary troubles and fears on the ſtate of your conſcience; all the operations of grace begin with theſe; conſequently while you continue tranquil, it is evident that God treateth you according to all the rigour of his juſtice, and that he exerciſeth upon you the moſt terrible of his chaſtiſements; I mean to ſay, his neglect and the denial of his grace. Peace in ſin, the ſecurity in which you live, is therefore the moſt infallible mark that God is no longer with you, and that his grace, which in the criminal ſoul always works trouble and anxiety, dread and diſtruſt, is totally extinguiſhed in yours. Thus you comfort yourſelf on what ought to excite your juſteſt fears; the moſt deplorable ſigns of your reprobation form in your mind the moſt ſolid foundation of your hope: truſt in ſin is the moſt terrible chaſtiſement with which God can puniſh the ſinner, and you draw from it a prejudication of ſalvation and of penitence. Tremble, if any remains of faith be yet left you; this calm is the forerunner of a ſhipwreck; you are ſtamped with the mark of the reprobate; reckon not upon a mercy which treats you ſo much the more rigorouſly as it permits you to hope and to depend upon it.

The error of the majority of ſinners is that of imagining that the grace of converſion is one of thoſe ſudden miracles by which the whole face of things is changed in the twinkling of an eye; which plants, tears up, deſtroys, rears up at the firſt ſtroke, and in an inſtant creates the new man, as the earthly man was formerly drawn from nothing. The groſſeſt of all miſtakes, my dear hearer;

converſion

converſion is in general a ſlow and tardy miracle, the fruit of cares, of troubles, of fears, and of bitter anxieties.

The days, ſaith Jeſus Chriſt, which are to precede the utter deſtruction of this viſible world and the coming of the Son of Man, ſhall be days of trouble and wo; nations ſhall riſe up againſt nations, and kings againſt kings; horrible ſigns ſhall be ſeen in the firmament long before the King of Glory himſelf ſhall appear; all nature ſhall announce, by its diſorder, the approaching deſtruction and the coming of its God. Ah! my dear hearer, behold the image of the change of your heart, of the deſtruction of that world of paſſions within you, of the coming of the Son of Man into your ſoul. Long before that great event, internal wars ſhall take place; you ſhall feel your paſſions excited one againſt the other; bleſſed ſigns of ſalvation ſhall appear upon your perſon; all ſhall be ſhaken, all ſhall be diſturbed; all within you ſhall annouce the deſtruction of the carnal man, the coming of the Son of God, the end of your iniquities, the renovation of your ſoul a new heaven and a new earth. Ah! when theſe bleſſed things ſhall come to paſs, then lift up your head and ſay, that your redemption draweth nigh; then be confident, and adore the awful but conſolatory preparations of a God who is on the eve of entering into your heart. But, while nothing is ſhaken within you, and no change appears in your ſoul; while your heart faileth not for fear, and your paſſions, ſtill tranquil, remain undiſturbed but by the obſtacles which retard their gratification; ah! miſtruſt thoſe who ſhall tell you that the Lord draweth nigh; that you will immediately find him in the ſanctuary, I mean to ſay, in the participation of the ſacrament, in thoſe retired places to which you ſhall perhaps go to comfort him in the perſon of his afflicted members; who will be continually

ſaying, "Lo, here is Chriſt;" believe them not; they are falſe prophets, ſaith Jeſus Chriſt; no ſign of his coming hath taken place within you; in vain you expect and preſume; it is not in this manner that he will come; trouble and dread walk before him; and the ſoul who continues tranquil and yet truſts, ſhall never be viſited by him.

"Happy, therefore, is the man that feareth alway:" he, whoſe virtues do not entirely quiet him upon his eternal deſtiny, who trembles leſt the imperfections mingled with his moſt laudable works not only deſtroy their whole merit before God, but even rank them among thoſe which God ſhall puniſh on the day of his wrath. But what idea, will ſome one ſay to me, do you give us of the God we worſhip? An idea worthy of him, my brethren; and, in my ſecond part, I ſhall prove to you, that falſe truſt is injurious to him, and forms to itſelf the idea of a God, who is neither true, wiſe, juſt, nor even merciful.

PART II. It is rather ſurpriſing, my brethren, that falſe truſt ſhould pretend to find even in religion motives which authoriſe it, and ſhould miſtake the moſt criminal of all diſpoſitions, for a ſentiment of ſalvation, and a fruit of faith and of grace. In effect, the ſinner who, without wiſhing to quit his irregularities, promiſes himſelf a change, alledges in juſtification of his preſumption, *1ſtly*, The power of God, who ruleth over the hearts of men, who can change in an inſtant the will, to whom it is equally eaſy to produce the child of promiſe from the ſterility of old age, as from the fecundity of youth; *2dly*, his juſtice, for having formed man of clay, that is to ſay, weak and with almoſt unconquerable tendencies to pleaſure, he ought to have ſome conſideration for his weakneſs, and more readily pardon faults which are, as it were, unavoidable to him; *laſtly*,

lastly, his mercy, always ready to receive the repentant sinner. Now, my brethren, it is easy to take from false trust pretexts so unworthy of piety, and to show that the disposition of the presuming sinner insults God in all of the above-mentioned perfections. Allow me to explain my reasons, and continue to honour me with your attention.

In the first place, when you conceive a powerful God master of hearts, and changing at his pleasure the rebellious wills of men, it is not true, that you at the same time conceive a power regulated by wisdom, that is to say, which doth nothing but in conformity with that order it hath established? Now, the presumptuous sinner attributes to God a blind power which acts indiscriminately. For, though he can whatever he willeth, nevertheless, as he is infinitely wise, there is an order in his wills; he willeth not at random, and whatever he doth hath its eternal reasons in the depths of his divine wisdom. Now, it is evident that this divine wisdom would not be sufficiently justified before men, if the grace of conversion were to be at last accorded to false trust. For say, in order to merit the greatest of all favours, it would then be sufficient to have a thousand times rejected it? The righteous man, who continually crucifies his flesh, who incessantly groans in order to obtain the precious gift of perseverance, would then have no better claim than the sinner, who, without having ever placed himself in a situation to merit it, hath always promised it to himself? It would then be perfectly indifferent, either to serve the Lord, and to walk uprightly before him, or to pursue the erroneous ways of the passions, since, at the end, the lot of each would be the same? Much more, it would then be a misfortune, a folly, a lost trouble, to have carried the yoke from youth,

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ſince nothing would be riſked by delaying it? The maxims of debauchery, on the love of pleaſures in the early ſtage of life, and on deferring repentance to the years of decrepitude and debility, would then be the rules of wiſdom and of religion? The wonders of grace would then ſerve but to tempt the fidelity of the juſt, but to authoriſe the impenitence of ſinners, but to deſtroy the fruit of the ſacrament, and to augment the ills of the church? Is this the God whom we worſhip? And would he be ſo wonderful in his gifts, according to the expreſſion of the prophet, if he were to diſpenſe them with ſo little either of order or of wiſdom?

In effect, if the empire which God hath over hearts could ſerve as a reſource for a preſumptuous ſinner, upon that footing the converſion of all men would be certain; even of thoſe infidels who know not the Lord, of thoſe barbarous nations who have never heard his name. Doth God not rule over the hearts of all men? Who hath ever withſtood his will? Is he not able to make his light ſhine through the profoundeſt darkneſs, to change into lambs the fierceſt lions, and to turn his enemies into the moſt intrepid confeſſors of his name? Is the heart of an Indian, or of a ſavage, a more arduous conqueſt to him, than that of a preſumptuous ſinner? Is not every thing alike eaſy to him? He hath only to ſay, and it is done. Yet, nevertheleſs, would you thereupon be willing that your eternal deſtiny ſhould run the ſame hazard as that of a ſavage, who in the heart of his foreſts, almoſt inacceſſible to the preaching of the goſpel, worſhips abſurd and monſtrous divinities? God may ſuſcitate, in his favour, evangelical miniſters, who, along with the lights of faith, ſhall bring grace and ſalvation to his ſoul. You ſay that it requires one of thoſe miraculous efforts of the Almighty

power, to overcome all the difficulties which apparently render the converſion of that unfortunate creature impoſſible; on the contrary, that you, ſurrounded with the aids of the ſacrament, with the lights of the doctrine and of inſtruction, are ſurely in a ſituation much more likely to ſecure your ſalvation; and conſequently, that you have infinitely more ground to promiſe it to yourſelf. Ah! my dear hearer, you decieve yourſelf, and I aſſure you, that, to me, the ſalvation of that infidel appears leſs hopeleſs than yours. He has never abuſed favours which he has never received; and hitherto you have unworthily rejected all thoſe which have been offered to you: he has never reſiſted that truth which he has never known; and you iniquitouſly withſtand it: the firſt impulſe of grace will triumph over his heart; and the ſtrongeſt impreſſions are ineffectual againſt the inflexibility of yours: a ſingle ray of light will diſcloſe to him errors and truths till then unknown; and all the lights of faith are unable to diſturb the tranquillity of your paſſions: he holds out to the mercy of God only the misfortune of his birth, only ſins almoſt involuntary, only wretchedneſs rather than crimes, all of them proper motives to affect him; and you hold out to him affected acts of ingratitude, and vile perſeverances in obſtinacy, all ſubjects calculated to remove him for ever from you. Ah! it is eaſy for the Lord to bear upon his wings acroſs the ſeas apoſtolical men; his angels, when he pleaſeth, know to tranſport his prophets from the land in which he is worſhipped, even into Babylon, in order to viſit a juſt man expoſed to the fury of lions; but if any thing were difficult to him, it would be that of conquering a rebellious heart, of recalling a ſoul born in the kingdom of light, ſurrounded with all the ſuccours of faith, penetrated with all the feelings of grace, aided by all the examples of piety, and, nevertheleſs, always firm in its errors. It is

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an illuſion, therefore, in his power to ſearch for vain motives of ſecurity; God could operate ſo many other prodigies in favour of a thouſand ſinners whom he forſaketh, although they be not ſo unworthy as you of his grace, it is a dangerous maxim to regulate his will upon his power.

The ſecond error which authoriſes falſe truſt, has its foundation in the unjuſt idea formed of the divine juſtice. They perſuade themſelves that man being born with violent inclinations for pleaſure, our errors are more worthy of the pity, than of the anger of the Lord; and that our weakneſs alone ſolicits his favour, in place of arming his indignation againſt us.

But, in the firſt place, it might be ſaid to you, that the corruption of your nature comes not from the Creator; that it is the work of man, and the puniſhment of his ſin; that the Lord had created man righteous; and conſequently, that this unfortunate tendency, of which you complain is an irregularity which God muſt puniſh, whenever you fall under it; how then can you ſuppoſe that it ſhall ſerve you as an excuſe? It is in conſequence of it that you are a child of wrath, and an out-caſt veſſel; how do you pretend to draw reaſons from thence, in order to enter into conteſtation even with God, and to challenge his juſtice? It is, in a word, in conſequence of it that you are unworthy of all favours; how dare you to hold it out as a reaſon for demanding them?

2*dly*, It might be ſaid to you, that, whatever be the weakneſs of our will, man is always maſter of his deſires; that he hath been left under the charge of his own reſolution; that his paſſions have no more empire over him than what he himſelf chooſes to allow them; and that water as

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well as fire, hath been placed in our way, in order to allow a perfect freedom of choice to our own will. Ah! I could herein atteſt your own conſcience, and demand of you, above all of you my dear hearer, if, in ſpite of your weakneſs, whenever you have forſaken the law of God, you have not felt that it wholly depended upon yourſelf to have continued faithful; if piercing lights have not diſcovered to you all the horror of your tranſgreſſion; if ſecret remorſes have not turned you away from it; if you have not then heſitated betwixt pleaſure and duty: if, after a thouſand internal deliberations, and thoſe ſecret viciſſitudes where one while grace, and the other while cupidity gained the victory, you have not at laſt declared for guilt, as if ſtill trembling, and almoſt unable to harden yourſelf againſt yourſelf? I might go even further and demand of you, if, conſidering the happy inclinations of modeſty and of reſerve, the diſpoſitions with which God had favoured you at your birth, the innocency of virtue would not have been more natural, more pleaſing, and more eaſy to you than the licentiouſneſs of vice; demand of you, if you have not ſuffered more by being unfaithful to your God, than it would have coſt you to have been righteous; if you have not been obliged to encroach more upon yourſelf, to do more violence to your heart, to bear with more vexations, to force your way through more intricate and more arduous paths! Ah! What then can the juſtice of God find in your diſſipations which doth not furniſh to him freſh matter of ſeverity and anger againſt you?

Laſtly, It might be added, that if you are born weak, yet the goodneſs of God hath environed your ſoul with a thouſand aids; that it is that well-beloved vine which he hath foſtered with the tendereſt care, which he hath fenced with a deep moat, and fortified with an in-

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acceſſible tower: I mean to ſay, that your ſoul hath been as if defended from its birth by the ſuccours of the ſacrament, by the lights of the doctrine, by the force of examples, by continual inſpirations of grace, and, perhaps, by the ſpecial aids likewiſe of an holy and a Chriſtian education provided for you by the Lord, and which ſo many others have wanted. Ingrate! Wherein could you be able to juſtify your weakneſs before the Lord, and to intereſt his juſtice itſelf to uſe indulgence towards you? Ah! What do your tranſgreſſions preſent to him, but the abuſes of his grace and means of ſalvation perverted, through the licentiouſneſs of your will, into occaſions of ſin?. . . . .

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But, let us leave all theſe reaſons, and tell me: that weakneſs of which you complain, and for which you pretend that God will have conſideration, is it not your own handwork, and the fruit of your own ſpecial irregularities? Recollect, here, thoſe happy days, when your innocence had not yet been wrecked; were your paſſions then ſo difficult to be overcome? Did modeſty, temperance, fidelity, piety, then appear to you as impracticable virtues? Did you find it impoſſible to reſiſt occaſions? Were your tendencies to pleaſure ſo violent, that you were not then their maſter? Ah! Whence comes it, then, that they now tyranniſe with ſuch dominion over your heart? Is it not, that having, through a fatal negligence, allowed them, to uſurp the command, they have, ever ſince, been too powerful to be conquered? Have you not forged, with your own hands, theſe chains? Look around you and ſee, if ſo many juſt, who bear (and from their earlieſt youth) the yoke, are even tempted in ſituations in which you are always certain to periſh. Ah! Why then ſhould you complain of a weakneſs which you have brought upon yourſelf?

ſelf? Why ſhould you count, that what muſt irritate the Lord againſt you ſhall ſerve to appeaſe him? What doth he ſee, when he ſees the weakneſs of your inclinations? He ſees the fruit of your crimes, the conſequences of a licentious and ſenſual life: Is it here that you dare to appeal to Juſtice itſelf; to that Juſtice before which the righteous themſelves entreat not to be Judged: My God! upon what ſhall the ſinner not flatter himſelf, ſince, in the moſt terrible of thy perfections, he finds reaſons of confidence.

The only rational and legitimate concluſion which it is permitted to you to draw from your own weakneſs, and from theſe inclinations for the world, and for pleaſures, which, in ſpite of all your reſolutions, hurry you away, is, that you have more occaſion to watch, to lament, and to pray, than others; that with more ſtudious care, you ought to ſhun the dangers and the attractions of the ſenſes, and of the fleſh. But, then it is that you believe yourſelf invincible, when we exhort you to fly all profane converſations, ſuſpicious intercourſes, doubtful pleaſures, laſcivious ſpectacles, and aſſemblies of ſin: Ah you then defend yourſelf upon the ground, that your innocence is in no degree injured there: You reſign to weak ſouls all the precautions of flight and of circumſpection: You tell us that every one muſt feel and know himſelf, and that thoſe who are weak enough to be injured there, ſhould, in prudence, keep away from them: But, how can you expect that God ſhall have conſideration for a weakneſs for which you have ſo little yourſelf? You are weak when there is queſtion of excuſing your crimes to him; you are no longer ſo, when, upon that ground, it is neceſſary to adopt painful meaſures, in order to continue faithful to him.

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But you will ſay, that, if every thing be to be dreaded from his juſtice, at leaſt his mercies are infinite; when his goodneſs ſhould find nothing in us proper to touch him, would it not find motives ſufficiently preſſing in itſelf? This would be the third illuſion of falſe truſt which I ſhould have to overthrow; but, beſides that I have elſewhere ſufficiently mentioned it, it is almoſt time to conclude. I mean, therefore, my dear hearer, to aſk you only one queſtion: When you ſay that the goodneſs of God is infinite, what do you pretend to ſay? That he never puniſhes guilt? You would not dare to mean ſo. That he never abandons the ſinner? The Sauls, the Antiochuſes, the Pharaohs, have taught you the contrary. That the immodeſt, the worldly, the revengeful, the ambitious, ſhall be ſaved alike as the juſt? You know that nothing unclean ſhall enter heaven. That he hath not created man to render him eternally miſerable? But wherefore hath he prepared a hell? That he hath already given you a thouſand marks of his goodneſs? But that is what ought to overwhelm your ingratitude on the paſt, and to make you to dread every thing for the future. That he is not ſo terrible as it is ſaid? But nothing is told of his juſtice but what he hath informed you himſelf. That he would be under the neceſſity of damning almoſt all men were all that we ſay true? But the goſpel declares to you in expreſs terms that few ſhall be ſaved. That he puniſheth not but at the worſt? But every rejected grace may be the term of his mercies. That it coſts him nothing to forgive? But hath he not the intereſts of his glory to attend to? That little is required to diſarm him? But a change muſt take place, and the changing of the heart is the greateſt of all his works. That that lively truſt which you have in his goodneſs can come only from him? But whatever leads not to him, by leading to repentance, can never come from him. What then do

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you mean to ſay? That he will not reject the ſacrifice of a broken and contrite heart? And behold, my dear hearer, what I have all along been preaching to you. Turn to the Lord, and then place your truſt in him; whatever your crimes may be, his mercy is always open to the repentant ſinner; throw yourſelf upon his goodneſs for the durability of your converſion, for perſeverance in his ſervice, for victory over the obſtacles which the enemy of ſalvation will continually be throwing in the way of your holy deſires; the grace which he doth, in inſpiring the feelings of a ſincere penitence, is always a bleſſed preſage of thoſe which he prepareth: never miſtruſt his mercy; there is nothing but what may be expected from him, when it is the ſorrow of having offended him which entreats it; never allow yourſelf to be caſt down by the remembrance of your paſt iniquities; whatever can be weeped can be pardoned: lock up in the boſom of his mercy the whole duration of the days which you have employed in offending him; they will be as though they had never been: from the moment that you ſhall begin to ſerve him, you will begin to increaſe before him; a thouſand years are only a day in his eyes from the moment that your crimes are terminated by a ſincere change: he is the God of ſinners the Benefactor of the ungrateful, the Father of prodigal children, the Shepherd of ſtrayed ſheep, the Friend of Samaritans; in a word, all the conſolations of faith ſeem to be for the repentant ſinner.

But, if you continue to promiſe yourſelf that, at laſt, the time will come when you ſhall ſeriouſly think upon your ſalvation without doing it ſtill; ah! remember my dear hearer, that it is in that very way that almoſt all ſinners have periſhed, and that it is the high-road to death in ſin; remember that the ſinner who often vainly deſires, is never

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that is to ſay, I will for ever forſake you; I will leave you ſingle; I will deliver you up to your inclinations, and to the falſe peace of your paſſions I will no longer be your God, your protector, your ſpouſe; I will for ever forſake you.

But may I here finiſh my miniſtry, my brethren, with the words formerly made uſe of by Jeſus Chriſt, in finiſhing his miſſion to an ungrateful people? You have refuſed to believe in me, ſaid he to them a few days before his death; you have ſhut your eyes againſt the light; you have had ears, yet you heard not: I go, and you ſhall die in your blindneſs. If you were ſtill blind, and if you had never known the truth, your ſin would be more excuſable; but at preſent you ſee, I have announced to you the truths which my Father had taught me; and therefore your ſin is without excuſe: your obſtinacy is conſummate; you have rejected that ſalvation which ſhall be offered to you no more, and the guilt of the truth deſpiſed muſt for ever be upon your head.

Great God! ſhould this then be the price of my toils, and the whole fruit of my miniſtry? Could the unworthineſs of the inſtrument, which thou haſt employed to announce thy word, have deſtroyed its efficacy, and placed a fatal impediment to the progreſs of the goſpel? No, my dear brethren, the virtue of the word of the croſs is not attached to that of the miniſter who announces it. In the hands of the Lord, clay can give ſight to the blind; and, when he pleaſeth, the walls of Jericho fall at the ſound of the weakeſt trumpets. I truſt then in the Lord for you, my brethren; that having received his word with gladneſs, as Paul formerly ſaid to the believers of Corinth; that having received it, not as the word of a man, weak, a

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sinner, and full of wants, all calculated to destroy the work of the gospel, and unworthy of so great a ministry, but as the word even of God, it shall fructify in you; and that, on the awful day of judgment, when account shall be demanded from me of my ministry, and from you of the fruit which you have reaped from it, I shall be your defence and your justification, and you my glory and my crown. So do I ardently wish it.

SERMON

SERMON III.

ON THE VICES AND VIRTUES OF THE GREAT.

MATTHEW iv. 8.

And the Devil ſheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and ſaith unto him, all theſe things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worſhip me.

HUMAN proſperities have always been one of the moſt dangerous wiles employed by the devil to entrap men. He knows that the love of fame and of diſtinction is ſo natural to us, that, in general, nothing is conſidered as too much for their attainment; and that the uſe of them is ſo ſeducing, and ſo apt to lead aſtray, that nothing is more rare than piety ſurrounded with pomp and power.

Nevertheleſs, it is God alone who raiſeth up the great and the powerful; who placeth you above the reſt, in order to be the fathers of the people, the comforters of the afflicted, the refuge of the helpleſs, the ſupports of the church, the protectors of virtue, and the models of all believers.

Suffer then, my brethren, that, entering into the ſpirit of our goſpel, I here lay before you the dangers, as well

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as the advantages of your ſtate; and that I point out to you the obſtacles and the facilities which the rank, to which, through providence you are born, preſents to your diſcharge of the duties of a Chriſtian life.

Great temptations, I confeſs, are attached to your ſtation; but it has likewiſe as great reſources: people of rank are born, it would ſeem, with more paſſions than the reſt of men; yet have they alſo the opportunity of practiſing more virtues: their vices are followed with more conſequences; but their piety becomes alſo more beneficial: in a word, they are much more culpable than the people when they forget their God; but they have likewiſe more merit in remaining faithful to him.

My intention, therefore, at preſent, is to repreſent to you the extenſive good, or the boundleſs evils, which always accompany your virtues or vices; to convince you of what influence the elevated rank to which you are born, is towards good, or towards evil; and, laſtly, to render irregularity odious to you, by unfolding the inexplicable conſequences which your paſſions drag after them; and piety amiable, through the unutterable benefits which always follow your good examples. It would matter little to point out the dangers of your ſtation, were the advantages of it not likewiſe to be ſhown. The Chriſtian pulpit declaims in general againſt the grandeurs and the glory of the age; but it would be of little avail to be continually ſpeaking of your complaints, were their remedies not held out to you at the ſame time. Theſe are the two truths which I mean to unite in this diſcourſe, by laying before you the endleſs conſequences of the vices of the great and powerful, and what ineſtimable benefits flow from their virtues.

PART

PART I. "A ſore trial ſhall come upon the mighty, ſays "the Spirit of God; for mercy will ſoon pardon the mean- "eſt; but mighty men ſhall be mightily tormented."

It is not, my brethren, becauſe he is mighty himſelf, that the Lord, as the Scriptures ſay, rejects the great and the mighty, or that rank and dignity are titles hateful in his eyes, to which his favours are denied, and which, of themſelves, conſtitute our guilt. With the Lord there is no exception of perſons: he is the Lord of the cedars of Lebanon, as well as of the humble hyſſop of the valley: he cauſes his ſun to riſe over the higheſt mountains, as well as over the loweſt and obſcureſt places; he hath formed the ſtars of heaven, as well as the worms which crawl upon the earth: the great are even more natural images of his greatneſs and glory, the miniſters of his authority, the means through which his liberalities and generoſity are poured out upon his people. And I come not here, my brethren, in the uſual language, to pronounce anathemas againſt human grandeurs, and to make your ſtation a crime, ſince that very ſtation comes from God, and that the object in queſtion is not ſo much to exaggerate the perils of it, as to point out the infinite ways of ſalvation attached to that rank to which, through the will of providence, you have been born.

But, I ſay, that the ſins of the great and powerful have two characters of enormity which render them infinitely more puniſhable before God, than the ſins of the commonality of believers: *1ſtly*, the ſcandal; *2dly*, ingratitude.

The ſcandal. There is no crime to which the goſpel leaves leſs hope of forgiveneſs than that of being a ſtumbling-block to our brethren: "Wo unto the man," ſaid Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt, "who ſhall offend one of theſe little ones "which believe in me; it were better for him that a mill-"ſtone were hanged about his neck, and that he were "drowned in the depth of the ſea." *1ſtly*, Becauſe you deſtroy a ſoul which ought eternally to have enjoyed God. *2dly*, Becauſe you occaſion your brother to periſh, for whom Jeſus Chriſt had died. *3dly*, Becauſe you become the miniſter of the devil's deſigns for the deſtruction of ſouls. *4thly*, Becauſe you are that man of ſin, that anti-chriſt of whom the apoſtle ſpeaks; for Jeſus Chriſt hath ſaved man, and you deſtroy him; Jeſus Chriſt hath raiſed up true worſhippers to his Father, and you deprive him of them; Jeſus Chriſt hath gained us by his blood, and you ſnatch his conqueſt from him; Jeſus Chriſt is the phyſi-cian of ſouls, and you are their corrupter; he is their way, and you are their ſnare; he is the ſhepherd who comes in ſearch of his periſhing ſheep, and you are the ravenous wolf which ſlays and deſtroys thoſe his Father had given him. *5thly*, Becauſe all other ſins die, as I may ſay, with the ſinner: but the fruit of his ſcandals will be immortal; they will ſurvive his aſhes; they will out-live him, and his crimes will not go down with him into the tomb of his fathers.

Achan was puniſhed with ſo much rigour for having taken only a wedge of gold from among the ſpoils which were conſecrated to the Lord; my God! what then ſhall be the puniſhment of him who deprives Jeſus Chriſt of a ſoul which was his precious ſpoil, redeemed not with gold and ſilver, but with all the divine blood of the Lamb without ſtain? The golden calf was reduced into powder for having occaſioned the prevarication of Iſrael; great God! and could all the ſplendour which ſurrounds the great and the powerful ſhelter them from thy wrath, when

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their exaltation becomes only a ſtumbling-block and a ſource of idolatry to the people? The brazen ſerpent itſelf, that ſacred monument of God's mercies upon Judah, was broken in pieces for having been an occaſion of ſcandal to the tribes: my God! and the ſinner already ſo odious through his own crimes, ſhall he be ſpared, when he becomes a ſnare and a ſtumbling-block to his brethren?

Now, my brethren, ſuch is the firſt character which always accompanies your ſins, you who are exalted through rank or birth over the commonalty of believers: the ſcandal. The obſcure and vulgar live only for themſelves. Mingled in the crowd, and concealed by the abjectneſs of their lot from the eyes of men, God alone is the ſecret witneſs of their ways, and the inviſible ſpectator of their backſlidings; if they fall, or if they remain ſtedfaſt, it is for the Lord alone, who ſees and who judges them; the world, which is unacquainted even with their names, is equally uninſtructed by their examples; their life is without conſequence; they may depart from the right path, but they quit it alone; and if they accompliſh not their own ſalvation, their ruin is, at leaſt, confined to themſelves, and has no influence over that of their brethren.

But perſons of an exalted ſtation are like a public pageant, upon which all eyes are fixed; they are thoſe houſes built upon a ſummit, the ſole ſituation of which renders them viſible from afar; thoſe flaming torches the ſplendour of which at once betrays and expoſes them to view. Such is the misfortune of greatneſs and of rank; you no longer live for yourſelves alone; to your deſtruction or to your ſalvation is attached the deſtruction or the ſalvation of almoſt all thoſe around you; your manners form the manners of the people; your examples are the rules of

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the multitude; your actions are as well known as your titles; it is impoſſible for you to err unknown to the public; and the ſcandal of your faults is always the melancholy privilege of your rank.

I ſay the ſcandal, *1ſtly*, of imitation. Men always willingly copy after evil, but more eſpecially when held out by great examples; they then ground a kind of vanity upon their errors, becauſe it is through theſe that they reſemble you; the people conſider it as giving them an air of conſequence to tread in your ſteps; the city thinks it an honour to adopt all the vices of the court; your manners form a poiſon which penetrates even to the provinces; which infects all ſtations, and gives a total change to the public manners; which decks out licentiouſneſs with an air of nobility and ſpirit, and, in place of the ſimplicity of our ancient manners, ſubſtitutes the miſerable novelty of your pleaſures, of your luxury, of your profuſions, and of your profane indecencies. Thus from you it is that obſcene faſhions, vanity of dreſs, thoſe artifices which diſhonour a viſage where modeſty alone ought to be painted, the rage of gaming, freedom of manners, licentiouſneſs of converſations, unbridled paſſions, and all the corruption of our ages, paſs to the people.

And from whence, think you, my brethren, comes that unbridled licentiouſneſs which reigns among the people? Thoſe who live far from you, in the moſt diſtant provinces, ſtill preſerve, at leaſt, ſome remains of their ancient ſimplicity, and the primitive innocence: they live in a happy ignorance of the greateſt part of thoſe abuſes which are now, through your examples, become laws. But, the nearer the countries approach to you, the more is the change of manners viſible, the more is innocence

adulterated, the more the abuſes are common, and the greateſt crime of the people is to be acquainted with your manners and your cuſtoms. After the chiefs of the tribes had entered into the tents of the daughters of Midian, all Judah went aſide from the Lord, and few were to be found who had kept free from the general guilt. Great God! how terrible ſhall one day be the trial of the great and powerful, ſince, beſides their own endleſs paſſions, they ſhall be made accountable to thee for the public irregularities, the depravity of the manners, and the corruption of their age; and, ſince, even the ſins of the people ſhall become their own ſpecial ſins!

2dly, A ſcandal of compliance. They endeavour to pleaſe, by imitating you; your inferiors, your creatures, your dependants, conſider a reſemblance to you as the high road to your favour; they copy your vices, becauſe you hold them out to them as virtues; they enter into your fancies, in order to enter into your confidence; they outrival each other in copying, or in ſurpaſſing you, becauſe, in your eyes, their greateſt merit is in reſembling you. Alas! how many weak ſouls, born with the principles of virtue, and who, far from you, would have nurſed only thoſe diſpoſitions favourable to ſalvation, have had their innocence wrecked through the unfortunate neceſſity in which their fortune placed them of imitating you?

3dly, A ſcandal of impunity. You could never reprehend, in your dependants, thoſe abuſes and thoſe exceſſes which you allow to yourſelf: you are under a neceſſity of ſuffering in them what you have no inclination to refuſe to yourſelf: your eyes muſt be ſhut upon diſorders which are authoriſed by your own manners; and you are forced to pardon thoſe who reſemble you, leaſt you con-

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demn yourſelf. A woman of the world wholly devoted to the art of pleaſing, ſpreads through all her houſhold an air of licentiouſneſs and of worldlineſs; her houſe becomes a rock from whence innocence never departs uninjured; every one imitates at home what ſhe diſplays abroad; and ſhe muſt paſs over theſe irregularities, becauſe her own manners do not permit her tó cenſure them. What exceſſes, in thoſe houſes kept open and appropriated to everlaſting gaming, among that people, as I may ſay, of domeſtics, whom vanity hath multiplied beyond all number! You know the truth of this, my brethren, and the dignity of the Chriſtian pulpit does not defend me from repeating it here. How dearly do theſe unfortunate wretches pay for your pleaſures, who, out of your ſight, and no check to reſtrain them, fill up the idle time which your pleaſures leave to them, in every exceſs adapted to the meanneſs of their education, and their abject nature, and which they think themſelves authoriſed in doing by your examples! O my God! if he, who neglects his people, be worſe, in thy ſight, than an infidel, what then is the guilt of him who ſcandaliſes them, and is the cauſe of their finding death and condemnation where they ought to have found the ſuccours of ſalvation, and the aſylum of their innocence?

4thly, A ſcandal of employment and of neceſſity. How many unfortunate wretches periſh, in order to feed your pleaſures and your iniquitous paſſions? For you alone the dangerous arts ſubſiſt: the theatres are erected ſolely for your criminal recreations; profane harmonies every where reſound, and corrupt ſo many hearts, only to flatter the corruption of yours; the works, fatal to innocence, are tranſmitted to poſterity ſolely through the favour of your names and protection. It is you alone, my brethren, who give

give to the world laſcivious poets, pernicious authors, and profane writers: it is to pleaſe you that theſe corrupters of the public manners perfect their talents, and ſeek their exaltation and fortune in a ſucceſs, the only end of which is the deſtruction of ſouls; it is you alone who protect, reward, and produce them; who take from them, by honouring them with your familiarity, that mark of diſgrace and infamy with which they had been ſtigmatiſed by the laws of the church and of the ſtate, and which degraded them in the eyes of men.

Thus it is through you that the people participate in theſe debaucheries; that this poiſon infects the cities and provinces; that theſe public pleaſures become the ſource of the public miſeries and licentiouſneſs; that ſo many unfortunate victims renounce their modeſty to gratify your pleaſures, and, ſeeking to improve the mediocrity of their fortune by the exerciſe of talents which your paſſions alone have rendered uſeful and recommendable, come upon criminal theatres to expreſs paſſions for the gratification of yours; to periſh in order to pleaſe; to ſacrifice their innocence, in occaſioning the loſs of it to thoſe who liſten to them; to become public rocks, and the ſcandal of religion; to bring miſery and diſſentation even into your families, and to puniſh you, woman of the world, for the ſupport and the credit which you give them by your preſence and your applauſes, by becoming the criminal object of the paſſion and of the ill-conduct of your children, and perhaps dividing with yourſelf the heart of your huſband, and completely ruining his affairs and fortune.

5thly, A ſcandal of duration. It is little, my brethren, that the corruption of our ages is almoſt wholly the work of the great and powerful; the ages to come will likewiſe be indebted

debted to you, perhaps, for a part of their licentiouſneſs and exceſſes. Thoſe profane poems, which have ſeen the light ſolely through your means, ſhall ſtill corrupt hearts in the following ages: thoſe dangerous authors, whom you honour with your protection, ſhall paſs into the hands of your poſterity; and your crimes ſhall be multiplied with that dangerous venom which they contain, and which ſhall be communicated from age to age. Even your paſſions, immortaliſed in hiſtory, after having been a ſcandal in their time, will alſo become one in the following ages: the reading of your errors preſerved to poſterity, ſhall raiſe up imitators after your death: inſtructions in guilt will be ſought for in the narrative of your adventures; and your exceſſes ſhall not expire with you. The voluptuouſneſs of Solomon ſtill furniſh blaſphemies and deriſions to the pious, and motives of confidence to libertiniſm; the infamous paſſion of Potiphar's wife hath been preſerved down to us, and her rank hath immortaliſed her weakneſs. Such is the deſtiny of the vices and of the paſſions of the great and powerful: they do not live for their own age alone, they live for the ages to come, and the duration of their ſcandal hath no other limits than that of their name.

You know this to be a truth, my brethren; Do they not at preſent, continue to read, with new danger, thoſe ſcandalous memoirs compoſed in the age of our fathers, which have tranſmitted down to us the exceſſes of the preceding courts, and immortaliſed the paſſions of the principal perſons who figured in them? The irregularities of an obſcure people, and of the reſt of men who then lived, remain ſunk in oblivion; their paſſions terminated with them; their vices, obſcure as their names, have eſcaped hiſtory; and, with regard to us, they are as though they had never been: and the errors of thoſe who were diſtinguiſhed in

their

their age by their rank and birth, are all that now remains to us of theſe paſt times; it is their paſſions that continually inflame new ones, even at this day, through the licentiouſneſs of, and the open manner in which they are mentioned by the authors who hand them down to us; and the ſole privilege of their condition is, that, while the vices of the lower orders of people ſink with themſelves, thoſe of the great and the powerful ſpring up again, as I may ſay, from their aſhes, paſs from age to age, are engraven on the public monuments, and are never blotted out from the memory of men. What crimes, great God! which are the ſcandal of all ages, the rock of all ſtations, and which even to the end, ſhall ſerve as an excitement to vice, as a pretext to the ſinner, and as a laſting model of debauchery and licentiouſneſs!

Laſtly, a ſcandal of ſeduction. Your examples, in honouring vice, render virtue contemptible: the Chriſtian life becomes ſo ridiculous, that thoſe who profeſs it are almoſt aſhamed of it before you; the exterior of piety has an ungracious and aukward appearance, which is concealed in your preſence, as if it were a bent which diſhonours the mind. How many ſouls, touched by God, only reſiſt his grace and his ſpirit through the dread of forfeiting with you that degree of confidence which a long ſociety in pleaſures hath given to them! How many ſouls, diſguſted with the world, yet who have not the courage to declare themſelves and return to God, leſt they expoſe themſelves to your ſenſeleſs deriſions; ſtill continue to copy your manners, upon which they have been fully undeceived by grace, and, through an unrighteous complaiſance and reſpect for your rank, take a thouſand ſteps from which their new faith and likewiſe their inclination are equally diſtant!

I ſpeak

I ſpeak not of the prejudices which you perpetuate in the world againſt virtue; of thoſe lamentable diſcourſes againſt the godly which your authority confirms; which paſs from you to the people, and keep up, in all ſtations, thoſe ancient prepoſſeſſions againſt piety, and thoſe continual deriſions of the righteous, which deprive virtue of all its dignity, and hardens ſinners in vice.

And from thence, my brethren, how many righteous ſeduced! How many weak led aſtray! How many wavering ſouls retained in ſin! How many impious and libertine ſouls ſtrengthened! What an obſtacle do you become to the fruit of our miniſtry! How many hearts, already prepared, oppoſe, to the force of the truth which we announce, only the long engagements which bind them to your manners and to your pleaſures, and find within themſelves only you who ſerve as a wall and a buckler againſt grace! My God! what a ſcourge for the age, what a misfortune for the people, is a grandee according to the world, who lives not in the fear of thee, who knows thee not, and who acts in contempt of thy laws and eternal ordinances! It is a preſent which thou ſendeſt to men in thy wrath, and the moſt dreadful mark of thine indignation upon the cities and upon the kingdoms.

Yes, my brethren, behold what you are when you belong not to God. Such is the firſt character of your faults, the ſcandal. Your lot decides in general that of the people: the exceſſes of the lower ranks are always the conſequence of your exceſſes; and the tranſgreſſions of Jacob, ſaid the prophet, that is to ſay, of the people and of the tribes, came only from Samaria, the ſeat of the great and of the mighty.

But,

[illegible] granting that no new degree of enormity [illegible] specially attached to the great by the scandal in- [illegible] ingratitude, which forms the se- [illegible] would be amply sufficient to attract, [illegible] neglect of God by which his bowels [illegible] compassion and clemency.

[illegible] God hath preferred you to so ma- [illegible] fellow-creatures who anguish in obscurity [illegible] exalted you, and hath caused you to [illegible] splendour and abundance; he hath chosen you [illegible] the people to load you with benefits; in you alone he hath assembled riches, honours, titles, distinctions, and all the advantages of the earth; it would seem that his providence watches only for you, while so many unfortu- nate millions eat the bread of tribulation and of sorrow; the earth seems to be produced for you alone; the sun to rise and go down solely for you; even the rest of men seem born only for you, and to contribute to your grandeur and purposes; it would appear that the Lord is occupied solely with you, while he neglecteth so many obscure souls whose days are days of sorrow and want, and for whom it would seem that there is no God upon the earth; yet, nevertheless, you turn against God all that you have re- ceived from his hands; your abundance serves for the in- dulgence of your passions; your exaltation facilitates your criminal pleasures, and his blessings become your crimes.

Yes, my brethren, while thousands of unfortunate fel- low-creatures, upon whom his hand is so heavy; while an obscure populace, for whom life has nothing but hardships and toil, invoke and bless him, raise up their hands to him in the simplicity of their heart, regard him as their father, and give him every mark of an unaffected piety, and of a

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ſincere religion: you, whom he loads with his benefits; you, for whom the entire world ſeems to be made, you acknowledge him not; you deign not to lift up your eyes to him; you never beſtow even a moment's reflection whether there be or be not a God above you who interferes in the things of the earth; in place of thankſgivings you return him inſults, and religion is only for the people.

Alas! you think it ſo mean and ſo ungenerous when thoſe, whoſe advancement was your work, neglect you, deny their obligations, and even employ that credit, which they owe ſolely to you, in thwarting and in ruining you: But, my brethren, they only act by you as you do towards your God. Is not your exaltation his work? Is it not his hand alone which hath ſeparated your anceſtors from the crowd, and hath placed them at the head of the people? Is it not through his providence alone that you are born of an illuſtrious blood, and that you enjoy from your birth, what a whole life of care and of toil could never have offered you reaſon to expect? What had you in his eyes more than ſo many unfortunate fellow-creatures whom he leaveth in want? Ah! if he had paid regard only to the natural qualities of the ſoul, to probity, honeſty, modeſty, innocence; how many obſcure ſouls, born with all theſe virtues, might have been preferred, and would now have been occupying your place? If he had conſulted only the uſe which you were one day to make of his benefits; how many unfortunate ſouls, had they been placed in your ſituation, would have been an example to the people, the protectors of virtue, and in their abundance would have glorified God, they who even in their indigence invoke and bleſs him; while you, on the contrary, are the cauſe of his name being blaſphemed, and your example becomes a ſeduction for his people?

He chooſeth you, however, and rejecteth them; he humbleth them and exalteth you; for them he is an hard and ſevere maſter, and for you a liberal and bountiful father. What more could he have done to engage you to ſerve and to be faithful to him? What more powerful attraction, or more likely to ſecure the homages of your hearts than benefits? "Thine, O Lord," ſaid David at the height of all his proſperity, "is the greatneſs, and the power, "and the glory: both riches and honour come from thee; "and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give ſtrength "unto all. It is juſt then, O my God, to glorify thee in "thy gifts; to meaſure what I owe thee upon what thou "haſt done for me, and to render mine exaltation, my "greatneſs, and all that I am ſubſervient to thy glory."

Yet, nevertheleſs, my brethren, the more he hath done for you, the more do you raiſe yourſelf up againſt him. It is the rich and the powerful who live without other God in this world, than their iniquitous pleaſures. It is you alone who diſpute the ſlighteſt homages to him; who believe yourſelves to be diſpenſed from whatever is irkſome or ſevere in his law; who fancy yourſelves born for the ſole purpoſe of enjoying yourſelves, of applying his benefits to the gratification of your paſſions, and who remit to the common people the care of ſerving him, of returning him thanks, and of religiouſly obſerving the ordinances of his holy law.

Thus, frequently, the people worſhip, and you inſult him; the people appeaſe, and you provoke him; the people invoke and you neglect him; the people zealouſly ſerve him, and you look down upon his ſervants; the people are continually raiſing up their hands to him, and you doubt whether he even exiſt; you who alone feel the effects of his liberality,

liberality, and of his power; his chaſtiſements form worſhippers to him, and his benefits are followed only with deriſions and inſults.

I ſay his benefits: For with regard to you, he hath not confined them to the mere external advantages of fortune. He hath likewiſe produced you with more favourable diſpoſitions to virtue than the ſimple people; a heart more noble, and more exalted; happier inclinations; ſentiments more worthy of the grandeur of faith; more underſtanding, elevation of mind, knowledge, inſtruction, and reliſh for good. You have received from nature, milder paſſions, more cultivated manners, and all the other incidental advantages of high birth; that politeneſs which ſoftens the temper; that dignity which reſtrains the ſallies of the diſpoſition; that humanity which renders you more open to the impreſſions of grace. How many benefits do you then abuſe, when you live not according to God! What a monſter is a man of high rank, loaded with honours and proſperity, who never lifts up his eyes to heaven to worſhip the hand which beſtows them!

And whence, think you, come the public calamities, the ſcourges with which the cities and provinces are afflicted? It is ſolely in puniſhment of your iniquitous abuſe of abundance, that God ſometimes ſtriketh the land with barrenneſs. His juſtice, irritated that you turned his own benefits againſt himſelf, withdraws them from your paſſions; curſes the land; permits wars and diſſentions; crumbles your fortunes into duſt; extinguiſhes your families; withers the root of your poſterity; makes your titles and poſſeſſions to paſs into the hands of ſtrangers; and holds you out as ſtriking examples of the inconſtancy of human affairs, and the anticipated monuments of his wrath

againſt

againſt hearts equally ungrateful and inſenſible to the paternal cares of his providence.

Such, my brethren, are the two characters inſeparable from your ſins; the ſcandal and the ingratitude: behold what you are when you depart from God; and this is what you have never perhaps paid attention to. From the moment that you are guilty, you cannot be indifferently ſo. The paſſions are the ſame in the people and among the powerful; but very different is the guilt; and a ſingle one of your crimes often leads to more miſeries, and hath before God, more extended and more terrible conſequences, than a whole life of iniquity in an obſcure and vulgar ſoul. But your virtues have alſo the ſame advantage and the ſame lot; and this is what remains for me to prove in the laſt part of this diſcourſe.

PART II. If ſcandal and ingratitude be the inſeparable conſequences of the vices and paſſions of perſons of high rank, their virtues have alſo two particular characters, which render them far more acceptable to God than thoſe of common believers; firſtly, the example; ſecondly, the authority. And this, my brethren, is a truth highly conſoling to you, who are placed by providence in an exalted ſtation, and well calculated to animate you to ſerve God, and to render virtue lovely to you. For it is an illuſion to conſider the rank to which you are born as an obſtacle to ſalvation, and to the duties impoſed on us by religion. The rocks are more dangerous there, I confeſs, than in an obſcure lot, the temptations ſtronger and more frequent; and, while pointing out the advantages with regard to ſalvation, of high rank, I pretend not to conceal thoſe dangers which Jeſus Chriſt himſelf hath pointed out to us in the goſpel, as being attached to it.

I mean

I mean only to eſtabliſh this truth, that you may do more for God than the common people; that infinitely more advantages accrue to religion from the piety of a ſingle perſon of diſtinction, than from that of almoſt a whole people of believers: and that you are ſo much the more culpable when you neglect God, in proportion to the glory that he would draw from your fidelity, and that your virtues have more extended conſequences for the edification of believers.

The firſt is the example. A ſoul from among the people who fears God, glorifies him only in his own heart: he is a child of light, who walks, as I may ſay, amid darkneſs: he pays his own homage, but he attracts no others to him: ſhut up in the obſcurity of his fortune, he lives under the eyes of God alone: he wiſhes that his name be glorified, and, by theſe deſires, he renders to him that glory which he cannot do by his examples: his virtues tend to his own ſalvation; but they are as loſt for the ſalvation of his brethren: he is here below as a treaſure hidden in the earth, which the vineyard of Jeſus Chriſt beareth unwittingly, and of which he maketh no uſe.

But for you, my brethren, who live expoſed to the view of the public, and whoſe eyes are always upon you, your virtuous examples become equally ſhining as your names; you ſpread the good ſavour of Jeſus Chriſt wherever that of your rank and titles is ſpread: you make the name of the Lord to be glorified wherever your own is known; the ſame elevation which makes you to be known upon the earth, likewiſe informs all men what you do for heaven: the wonders of grace are every where ſeen in your natural advantages: the people, the cities, the provinces, who are continually hearing your names repeated, feel,

awakened

Yes, my brethren, I repeat that, in ſerving God, you give a new force to our miniſtry; more weight to the truths announced by us to the people; more confidence to our zeal; more dignity to the word of Jeſus Chriſt; more credit to our cenſures; more conſolations to our toils; and, in viewing you, the world is convinced of truths which it had diſputed with us. What benefits then accrue from your examples! You accredit piety, and honour religion in the mind of the people; you animate the righteous of every ſtation; you conſole the ſervants of God; you ſpread throughout a whole kingdom a ſavour of life that overthrows vice and countenances virtue; you ſupport the rules of the goſpel againſt the maxims of the world; you are cited in the cities and in the moſt diſtant provinces to encourage the weak, and to aggrandiſe the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt; fathers teach your names to their children to animate them to virtue; and, without knowing it, you become the model of the people, the converſation of the lower orders, the edification of families, the example of every ſtation and of every claſs. Scarcely had the heads of the tribes in the deſert, and the moſt diſtinguiſhed women, brought to Moſes their moſt precious ornaments for the conſtruction of the tabernacle, when all the people, incited by their example, preſented themſelves in crowds to offer their gifts and their preſents; and Moſes was even under the neceſſity of placing bounds to their pious alacrity, and of moderating the exceſs of their liberalities.

Ah! my brethren, what good, once more, may your examples do among the people! Public diſſipations diſcredited from the moment that you ceaſe to countenance them; indecent faſhions proſcribed whenever you neglect them; dangerous cuſtoms antiquated as ſoon as you forſake them; the ſource of almoſt all diſorders dried up from the

moment

moment that you live according to God. And how many ſouls thereby ſaved! What evils prevented! What crimes checked! What misfortunes hindered! What gain for religion is a ſingle perſon of rank, who lives according to faith! What a preſent doth God make to the earth, to a kingdom, to a people, when he beſtoweth grandees who live in his fear! And, ſhould the intereſt even of your own ſoul be inſufficient to render virtue amiable to you, ſhould not the intereſt of ſo many ſouls, to whom by living according to God, you are an occaſion of ſalvation, induce you to prefer the fear and the love of his law to all the vain pleaſures of the earth? Is the heart capable of taſting a more exquiſite pleaſure than that of being a ſource of ſalvation and of benediction to our brethren?

And what is yet more fortunate here for you is, that you do not live for your own age alone: I have already obſerved that your examples will paſs to the following ages; the virtues of the ſimple believers periſh, as I may ſay, with them; but your virtues will be recorded in hiſtory with your names. You will become a pious model for our poſterity, equally as you have been ſo for the people of your own times; connected, through your rank and your employments, with the principal events of our age, you will be tranſmitted with them to the ages to come. Succeeding courts will ſtill find the hiſtory of your piety and of your manners, blended with the public hiſtory of our days; you will do credit to piety even in the ages to follow; the memory of your virtues, preſerved in our annals, will ſtill ſerve as an inſtruction to thoſe of your deſcendants who ſhall read them; and it ſhall one day be ſaid of you, as of thoſe men full of glory and of righteouſneſs, mentioned by ſcripture, that your piety hath not finiſhed with you; that your bodies, indeed, are buried in

peace, but that your name liveth for evermore; that your ſeed ſtandeth for ever, and that your name ſhall not be blotted out,

Nor is this all: the example renders your virtues a public good, which is their firſt character; but authority, which is their ſecond, finiſhes and ſuſtains the endleſs good which your examples have begun. And, in ſpeaking of the authority, why can I not here unfold all the immenſity of the fruitful conſequences of the piety of the great, which this idea excites in my mind?

1ſtly, The protection of virtue. Timid virtue is often oppreſſed, becauſe it wants either boldneſs to ſhew itſelf, or protection to defend it: obſcure virtue is often deſpiſed, becauſe nothing exalts it to the eyes of the ſenſes, and the world is delighted to turn into a crime againſt piety the obſcurity of thoſe who practiſe it. But, ſo ſoon as you adopt its cauſe, ah! virtue no longer wants protection; you become the interpreters of the godly with the prince, and the channels by which they find continual acceſs to the throne; you bring righteous characters into office, who become public examples; you bring to light ſervants of God, men of learning and of virtue, who would have remained in the duſt, and who, through favour of your ſupport, appear to the public, employ their talents, contribute to the edification of believers, to the inſtruction of the people, to the conſummation of the holy; teach the rules of virtue to thoſe who know them not, will teach them to our deſcendants, and will hand down to all ages to come, with the pious monuments of their own zeal, the immortal fruits of that protection with which you have honoured virtue, and of your love for the righteous.

What

What ſhall I ſay? You ſtrengthen the zeal of the godly in holy undertakings; and your protection animates and enables them to conquer all the obſtacles which the demon conſtantly throws in the way of works which are to glorify God, and to contribute to the ſalvation of ſouls. What noble foundations and pious deſigns, now carried into execution, would have failed, if the authority of a righteous man in office had not removed the impediments which rendered their accompliſhment apparently impoſſible.

What more ſhall I ſay? By your examples you render virtue reſpectable to thoſe who love it not, and they are no longer aſhamed of becoming a chriſtian from the moment they therein reſemble you. You diveſt impiety of that air of confidence and of oſtentation with which it dares to ſhew itſelf, and free-thinking ceaſes to be faſhionable as ſoon as you declare againſt it. You maintain the religion of our fathers among the people; you preſerve faith to the following ages; and often it requires only a ſingle perſon of rank in a kingdom, firm in faith, to ſtop the progreſs of error and innovation, and to preſerve to a whole people, the faith of their anceſtors. The ſingle Eſther ſaved the people and the law of God in a great empire; Mathias individually ſtood out againſt foreign altars, and prevented ſuperſtitions from prevailing in the midſt of Judah. Oh! my brethren, how grand when you belong to Jeſus Chriſt! And with what ſuperior luſtre and dignity do your rank and your birth appear in the vaſt fruits of your piety, than in the luxury of your paſſions, and in all the vain pomp of human magnificence!

2dly, The rewards of virtue. You render it honourable by giving it that preference, which is its due, in choice of places dependent upon you, and in entruſting with employments

ployments only thoſe whoſe piety entitles them to the public confidence; by placing dependence upon the fidelity of your inferiors only in proportion as they are faithful to God, and, in men, looking principally for rectitude of heart and innocence of manners, without which all other talents no longer form but an equivocal merit, either injurious to themſelves, or uſeleſs to the public.

And from thence, what new weal to the public! What happineſs for a kingdom in which the godly occupy the firſt places; where employments are the rewards of virtue; where the public affairs are entruſted only to thoſe who have more the public intereſt in view than their own, and who conſider as nothing the gain of the whole world, if they thereby loſe their ſoul!

What advantage for the people when they find their fathers in their judges; the protectors of their helpleſſneſs in the arbiters of their lot; the conſolers of their ſufferings in the interpreters of their intereſts! What abuſes prevented! What tears wiped away! What crimes avoided! What harmony in families! What conſolation for the unfortunate! What a compliment even to virtue, when the people are rejoiced to ſee it in office, and when the world, all worldly as it is, is however well pleaſed to have the godly for its defenders and judges! What an attraction to virtue, when it is ſeen to have the promiſe, not only of the life that now is, but of that alſo which is to come.

And ſay not, my brethren, that, in rewarding virtue, ſinners are not corrected, but only hypocrites multiplied. I know how far men may be carried by a thirſt of advancement, and what abuſes they are capable of making of religion in order to accompliſh their ends: but, at leaſt, you force

force vice to hide itself; you divest it of that notoriety and security which spread and communicate it; you preserve the externals of religion among the people; you multiply the examples of piety among believers, and if licentiousness be not in reality diminished, at least the scandals are more rare!

Lastly, The holy liberalities of virtue. But, I feel that my subject leads me away, and it is time to conclude. Yes, my brethren, what an additional fund of comfort for the people in the Christian and charitable use of your riches! You shelter innocence; you open asylums of penitence for guilt; you render virtue lovely to the unfortunate by the resources which they find in yours; you secure to husbands the fidelity of their wives; to fathers the salvation of their children; to pastors the safety of their flock; peace to families, comfort to the afflicted, innocence to the deserted widow, an aid to the orphan, good order to the public, and to all the support of their virtue, or the cure of their vices.

And here, my brethren, could you but comprehend the wide extended fruits of your virtue, and the inexplicable advantages accruing from it to the church. What scandals avoided! What crimes prevented! What public scourges checked! How many weak preserved! How many righteous sustained! How many sinners recalled! How many souls withdrawn from the precipice! How much you contribute to the aggrandizement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, to the honour of religion, to the consummation of the holy, and to the salvation of all believers! How many of the chosen of every tongue and of every tribe shall one day in heaven place at your feet their

crown

crown of immortality, as if publicly to acknowledge that they are indebted for it to you! What conſolation to be able to ſay to yourſelf, that, in ſerving God, you will attract other ſervants to him, and that your piety becomes a bleſſing upon the people! No, my brethren, if there be any thing flattering in rank, it is not thoſe vain diſtinctions attached to it by cuſtom; it is the power of becoming, by ſerving God, the ſource of public bleſſings, the ſupport of religion, the conſolation of the church, and the chief inſtruments employed by God for the accompliſhment of his merciful deſigns upon men.

Ah! What then do you not loſe when you do not live according to God! What do we ourſelves not loſe when you are wanting to us! Of how many advantages do you deprive believers! Of what conſolations do you not deprive yourſelves! What joy in heaven for the converſion of a ſingle great ſinner in the age! How highly criminal when you live not according to God! You can neither be ſaved nor condemned alone. You reſemble either that dragon of the revelation, who, being caſt out from heaven into the earth, drags after him in his fall ſo many of the ſtars; or that myſterious ſerpent ſpoken of by Jeſus Chriſt, who, being exalted upon the earth, happily attracts all after him. You are eſtabliſhed for the ruin or for the ſalvation of many; public ſcourges or comforts. May you, my brethren, know your true intereſts; may you feel what you are in the deſigns of God, how much you have it in your power to do for his glory, how much he expecteth of you, how much the church, and even we ourſelves, expect of you! Ah! you have ſo high an idea of your rank and of your ſtations with relation to the world!

But,

But, my brethren, permit me to ſay to you: you are yet unacquainted with all their greatneſs; you ſee but the humbleſt part of what you are; you are ſtill greater with relation to piety, and the privileges of your virtue are much more illuſtrious and more marked than thoſe of your titles. May you, my brethren, act up to your lot! And thou, O my God! touch, during theſe days of ſalvation, through the force of that truth with which thou filleſt our mouths, the great and the powerful; draw to thyſelf thoſe hearts upon whoſe conqueſt depends that of the reſt of believers; have compaſſion upon thy people by ſanctifying thoſe whom thy providence hath placed at their head; ſave Iſrael, in ſaving thoſe who rule it; give to thy church great examples, who perpetuate virtue from age to age, and who aſſiſt, even to the end, in forming that immortal aſſembly of righteous which ſhall bleſs thy name for ever and ever.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

ON THE INJUSTICE OF THE WORLD TOWARDS THE GODLY.

JOHN ix. 24.

Give God the praiſe; we know that this man is a ſinner.

WHAT can the pureſt and moſt irreproachable virtue expect from the injuſtice of the world, ſeeing it hath formerly found ſubjects for ſcandal and cenſure in the ſanctity even of Jeſus Chriſt? If, before their eyes, he work wonderful miracles; if, on this occaſion, he reſtore ſight to the blind, the Jews accuſe him of being a ſabbath-breaker; of working miracles through Belzebub rather than in the name of the Lord, and of only wiſhing, through theſe impoſtures, to overturn and to deſtroy the law of Moſes; that is to ſay, that they attack his intentions, in order to render ſuſpicious, and to criminate his works.

If he honour with his preſence the table of the Phariſees, that he may have an opportunity of recalling and inſtructing them, he is looked upon as a ſinner, and as a lover of good cheer: that is to ſay, that they make a crime to him of his works when they find it convenient, not to ſearch into the integrity of his intentions.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, If he appear in the temple, armed with zeal and ſeverity, to avenge the profanations which diſgrace that holy place, the zeal with which he is inflamed for the glory of his father is no longer in their mouth, but an unjuſt uſurpation of an authority which belongs not to him: that is to ſay, that they exerciſe themſelves in vague and unfounded reproaches, when they have nothing to ſay againſt his intentions, or his works.

I ſay, and I ſay it with ſorrow, that the piety of the godly doth not at preſent, experience more indulgence amongſt us, than the ſanctity of Jeſus Chriſt formerly met with in Judea. The pious are become objects of cenſure and deriſion to the public; and, in an age where diſſipation is become ſo general, where ſcandalous exceſſes of every kind furniſh ſuch ample matter to the malignity of converſations and cenſures, favour is liberally ſhewn to all, excepting to virtue and innocence.

Yes, my brethren, if the conduct of the godly be apparently irreproachable, and furniſh no materials for cenſure, you fix yourſelves on their intentions which appear not; you accuſe them of labouring towards their own purpoſes, and of having their own particular views and deſigns.

If their virtue ſeem to draw nearer to an equality with our own, and ſometimes abate from its ſeverity to attach us to God, by an oſtenſible conformity to your manners and cuſtoms; without ſearching into, or giving yourſelves any concern about their intentions, you conſtitute, as a crime in them, the moſt innocent complaiſances, and conceſſions the moſt worthy of indulgence.

Laſtly, If their virtue, inſpired by a divine fire, no longer keep meaſures with the world, and leave nothing to be alledged againſt either their intentions or their works; then you exerciſe yourſelves in vague diſcourſes, and unfounded reproaches againſt even their zeal and piety.

Now ſuffer me, my brethren, for once, to ſtand up againſt an abuſe ſo diſgraceful to religion, ſo injurious to that Being who forms the holy, ſo ſcandalous among Chriſtians, ſo likely to draw down upon us thoſe laſting curſes, which formerly turned the inheritance of the Lord into a deſerted and forſaken land, and ſo worthy of the zeal of our miniſtry.

You attack the intentions, when you have nothing to ſay againſt the works of the godly: and that is a temerity. You exaggerate their weakneſſes, and you make a crime to them of the ſlighteſt imperfections: and that is an inhumanity. You turn even their zeal and fervour into ridicule: and that is an impiety. And behold, my brethren, the three deſcriptions of the world's injuſtice towards the pious. An injuſtice of temerity, which always ſuſpects their intentions: An injuſtice of inhumanity, which gives no palliation to the ſlighteſt imperfections: An injuſtice of impiety, which, of their zeal and ſanctity, makes a ſubject of contempt and deriſion. May theſe truths, O my God! render to virtue that honour and glory which are due to it, and force the world itſelf to reſpect pious characters, whom it is unworthy to poſſeſs!

PART I. Nothing is more ſublime, or more worthy of veneration on the earth, than true virtue: the world itſelf is forced to acknowledge this truth. The elevation of ſentiment, the nobility of motive, the empire over the paſſions,

ſions, the patience under adverſity, the gentleneſs under injuries, the contempt of one's ſelf under praiſe, the courage under difficulties, the auſterity in pleaſures, the fidelity in duties, the equality of temper in all events with which philoſophy hath decked out its imaginary ſage, find their reality only in the diſciple of the goſpel. The more our manners are even corrupted, the more our times are diſſolute, the more doth a juſt ſoul, who, in the midſt of the general corruption, knows how to preſerve his righteouſneſs and his innocence, merit the public admiration; and, if the pagans themſelves ſo highly reſpected Chriſtians, in a time when all Chriſtians were holy, with greater reaſon are thoſe Chriſtians, who act up to the name of Chriſtian, worthy of our veneration and reſpect, at this period, when ſanctity is become ſo rare among believers.

How melancholy then for our miniſtry, that the corruption of manners ſhould oblige us to do here, what the firſt defenders of faith formerly did with ſo much dignity before the pagan tribunals: that is to ſay, to make the apology before the ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt; and that it ſhould be neceſſary to teach Chriſtians, to honour thoſe who profeſs themſelves ſuch: yet true it is; for deriſion and cenſure againſt piety ſeem at preſent to be the moſt dominant language of the world. I confeſs that the world ideally reſpects virtue; but it always deſpiſes thoſe who make a profeſſion of it: it acknowledges that nothing is more eſtimable than a ſolid and ſincere piety; but it complains that ſuch is no where to be found; and by always ſeparating virtue from thoſe who practiſe it, it only makes a ſhew of reſpecting the phantom of ſanctity and righteouſneſs, that it may be the better entitled to contemn and to cenſure the juſt.

Now

Now the firſt object, on which the ordinary diſcourſes of the world fall againſt virtue, is the probity of the intentions of the juſt. As what is apparent in their actions gives little hold in general to malignity and cenſure, they confine themſelves to the intentions: they pretend, and above all at preſent, when under a prince equally great as religious, virtue formerly a ſtranger, and dreaded at court, is now become the ſureſt path to favour and reward; they pretend that it is there to which all, who make a public profeſſion of it, point their aim: that their only wiſh is to accompliſh their ends; and that thoſe, who appear the moſt ſanctified and diſintereſted, are ſuperior to the reſt only in art and cunning; if they excuſe them from the meanneſs of ſuch a motive, they give them others equally unworthy of the elevation of virtue and of Chriſtian ſincerity. Thus when a ſoul, touched for its errors, becomes contrite; it is not God, but the world whom it ſeeks through a more cunning and concealed path; it is not grace which hath changed the heart, it is age which begins to efface its attractions, and to withdraw it from pleaſures, only becauſe pleaſures begin to fly from it. If zeal attaches itſelf to works of piety; it is not that they are charitable, it is becauſe they wiſh to become conſequential: If they ſhut themſelves up in ſolitude and in prayer, it is not their piety which dreads the dangers of the world, it is their ſingularity and oſtentation which wiſh to attract its ſuffrages: *Laſtly*, the merit of the moſt holy and the moſt virtuous actions is always diſparaged in the mouth of the worldly, by the ſuſpicions with which they endeavour to blacken the intentions.

Now, in this temerity I find three hateful characters, which expoſe the abſurdity and the injuſtice of it: It is a temerity of indiſcretion, ſeeing you judge, you decide upon

on what you know not: it is a temerity of corruption, ſeeing we generally ſuppoſe in others only what we feel in ourſelves: *Laſtly*, it is a temerity of contradiction, ſeeing you find unjuſt and fooliſh, when directed againſt yourſelf, the very ſame ſuſpicions which to you appear ſo well-founded againſt your brother. Loſe not, I entreat of you, the conſequence of theſe truths.

I ſay, *1ſtly*, a temerity of indiſcretion. For, my brethren, to God alone is reſerved the judgment of intentions and thoughts: He alone who ſees the ſecrecy of hearts can judge them; nor will they be manifeſted till that terrible day, when his light ſhall ſhine through and diſpel every darkneſs. An impenetrable veil is ſpread here below, over the depth of the human heart; we muſt then wait till the veil be rent, before the ſhameful paſſion which it conceals, as the apoſtle ſays, can become manifeſt, and before the myſtery of iniquity, which worketh in ſecret, can be revealed: till then, whatever paſſes in the heart of men, buried from our knowledge, is interdicted to the temerity of our judgments: even when what is viſible in the conduct of our brethren appears unfavourable to them, charity obliges us to ſuppoſe that what we ſee not makes amends for, and rectifies it; and it requires us to excuſe the faults of the actions which offend us by the innocency of the intentions which are concealed from our knowledge. Now, if religion ought to render us indulgent, and even favourable to their vices, will it ſuffer us to be cruel and inexorable to their virtues?

Indeed, my brethren, what renders your temerity here more unjuſt, more black, and more cruel, is the nature of your ſuſpicions. For, were your ſuſpicions of the pious to be directed only towards ſome of thoſe weakneſſes inſeparable

inſeparable from human nature; for inſtance, too much ſenſibility of injury, too much attention to their intereſts, too much inflexibility in their opinions; we would be entitled to reply to you, as we ſhall afterwards tell you, that you exact from the virtuous an exemption from error, and a degree of perfection which exiſt not in life. But you reſt not there; you attack their probity and integrity of heart; you ſuſpect them of attrocity, diſſimulation, and hypocriſy; of making the moſt holy things ſubſervient to their own views and paſſions; of being public impoſtors; of ſporting with God and man; and all theſe through the oſtenſible appearances of virtue. What, my brethren! You would not dare, after the moſt notorious guilt, to pronounce ſuch a ſentence on a convicted criminal; you would rather conſider his fault as one of thoſe misfortunes which may happen to all men, and of which an evil moment may render us capable; and you decidedly give judgment againſt the virtuous; and you ſuſpect in a pious character, from an holy and praiſe-worthy life, what you would not dare to ſuſpect from the moſt ſcandalous and criminal conduct of a ſinner? And you conſider as a witticiſm, when directed againſt the ſervants of God, what would appear to you as a barbarity when againſt a man ſtained with a thouſand crimes? Is virtue then the only crime unworthy of indulgence; or is it ſufficient, to ſerve Jeſus Chriſt, to become unworthy of all reſpect? Do the holy practices of piety, which ſurely ought rather to attract reſpect and eſtimation to your brother, become the only titles which confound him in your mind with the infamous and the wicked?

I allow that the hypocrite deſerves the execration of both God and man; that the abuſe which he makes of religion is the greateſt of crimes; that deriſions and ſatires are too mild

mild to decry a vice which deſerves deteſtation and horror from the human race; and that a profane theatre errs in throwing only ridicule upon a character ſo abominable, ſo ſhameful, and ſo afflicting to the church; for it ought to excite the tears and the indignation rather than the laughter of believers.

But I ſay, that this eternal inveteracy againſt virtue; that the raſh ſuſpicions which always confound the pious man with the hypocrite; that that malignity which, in making the moſt pompous eulogiums on righteouſneſs, finds no character amongſt the upright who is entitled to them; I ſay, that ſuch language, of which ſo little ſcruple is made by the world, ſaps religion, and tends towards rendering all virtue ſuſpicious: I ſay, that you thereby furniſh arms to the impious in an age when too many other ſcandals countenance and authoriſe impiety. You aſſiſt in making them believe that none, truly pious, exiſt on the earth; that even the ſaints, who have formerly edified the church, and whoſe memory we ſo warmly cheriſh, have held out to men only a falſe ſpectacle of virtue, of which, in reality, they had only the phantom and the appearances; and that the goſpel hath never formed but phariſees and hypocrites. Do you, my brethren, comprehend all the guilt of theſe fooliſh deriſions? You think that you are only deriding falſe virtue, and you are blaſpheming religion. I repeat it; in miſtruſting the ſincerity of the juſt whom you ſee, the free-thinker concludes that all who have preceded them, and whom we ſee not, were equally inſincere; that the martyrs themſelves, who met death with ſuch fortitude, and who rendered to truth the moſt ſhining and leaſt ſuſpicious teſtimony which can be given by man, were, only madmen, who ſought an human glory by a vain oſtentation of

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of courage and heroiſm; and, laſtly, that the venerable tradition of ſo many ſaints who, from age to age, have honoured and edified the church, is merely a tradition of knavery and deceit. And would to God that this were only a tranſport of zeal and exaggeration! Theſe blaſphemies, which ſtrike us with ſuch horror, and which ought to have been buried with paganiſm, we have ſtill the ſorrow to hear repeated among us. And you, ſhould ſhudder at them, unknowingly put them, however, into the mouth of the free-thinker; it is your continual ſarcaſms and cenſures upon piety which have rendered, in our days, impiety ſo general and ſo uncurbed.

I do not add that, by theſe means, every thing in ſociety becomes dubious and uncertain. There is no longer, then, either good faith, integrity, or fidelity among men. For, if we muſt no longer depend on the ſincerity and virtue of the juſt; if their piety be only a maſk to their paſſions, we aſſuredly will not place any confidence in the probity of ſinners and worldly characters: all men are conſequently only cheats and villains, of whom too much care cannot be taken, and with whom we ought to live as with enemies; and theſe ſo much the more to be dreaded, as, under a treacherous outſide of friendſhip and humanity, they conceal the deſign of either deceiving or ruining us. None but a heart profoundly wicked and corrupted can ſuppoſe ſuch iniquity and corruption in that of others.

And behold the ſecond character of that temerity of which we ſpeak. Yes, my brethren, that fund of malignity, which ſees guilt through the appearances even of virtue, and attributes criminal intentions to works of holineſs, can proceed only from a black and corrupted heart.

As

As the paſſions have poiſoned your heart, you whom this diſcourſe regards; as you are capable yourſelf of every duplicity and meanneſs; as you have nothing in your own breaſt, right, noble, or ſincere; you eaſily ſuſpect your brethren to be what you are; you cannot perſuade yourſelf that there ſtill exiſt ſimple, ſincere, and generous hearts on the earth; you think that you every where ſee what you feel in yourſelf; you cannot comprehend how honour, fidelity, ſincerity, and ſo many other virtues, always falſe in your own heart, ſhould have more reality in the hearts of perſons even the moſt reſpectable for their rank and character; you reſemble the courtiers of the king of the Ammonites; having no other occupation than that of being inceſſantly on the watch to ſupplant and lay ſnares for each other, they had little difficulty in believing that David was not more upright in his intentions with regard to their maſter. You think, ſaid they to that prince, that David means to honour the memory of your father, by ſending comforters to you to condole with you on his death? They are not comforters, but ſpies, whom he ſends to you: he is a villain, who, under the ſpecious outſide of an honourable and amicable embaſſy, ſeeks to diſcover the weakneſſes of your kingdom, and to take meaſures to ſurpriſe you. Such is more eſpecially the misfortune of courts; bred up, and living in deceit, they ſee only diſſimulation equally in virtue as in vice; as it is a ſtage upon which every one acts a borrowed character, they conclude that the pious man merely acts the perſonage of virtue: uncommon or unprofitable ſincerity ſeems always impoſſible.

A worthy heart, a heart upright, ſimple and ſincere, can hardly comprehand that there are impoſtors on the earth; he finds within himſelf the apology of other men, and, by

what it would coſt himſelf to be diſhoneſt, he meaſures what it ought to coſt to others. Thus, my brethren, ſearch into thoſe who form theſe ſhameful and raſh ſuſpicions againſt the pious, and you will find that, in general, they are diſorderly and corrupted characters, who ſeek to quiet themſelves in their diſſipations by the illuſive ſuppoſition that their weakneſſes are the weakneſſes of all men; that thoſe who are apparently the moſt virtuous are ſuperior to themſelves only in the art of concealment; and that, were they narrowly examined, we ſhould find them, in reality, made like other men; this idea is an iniquitous comfort to them in their debaucheries. They harden themſelves in iniquity, by thus aſſociating with themſelves, in it, all whom the credulity of the people calls virtuous; they form and endeavour to eſtabliſh in themſelves a ſhocking idea of the human race, in order to be leſs ſhocked with what they are forced to entertain of themſelves, and they try to perſuade themſelves that virtue no longer exiſts, in order that vice may appear to them more excuſeable; as if, O my God! the multitude of criminals could diſarm thy wrath, or deprive thy juſtice of the right to puniſh guilt.

But, ſay you, one has ſeen ſo many hypocrites who have ſo long abuſed the world, whom it regarded as ſaints, and the friends of God, and who, nevertheleſs, were only perverſe and corrupted men.

I confeſs it with ſorrow, my brethren: but, from that, what would you wiſh to conclude? That all the virtuous are ſimilar to them? The concluſion is deteſtible; and what would become of mankind were you, in this manner to reaſon on the reſt of men. We have ſeen many wives faithleſs to their honour and to their duty; but do modeſty

and

and fidelity no longer exiſt in the ſacred bond of marriage? Many magiſtrates have ſold their honour and diſgraced their function; but are juſtice and integrity conſequently baniſhed from every tribunal? Hiſtory hath preſerved to us the remembrance of too many perfidious, diſſembling, unfaithful and diſhonourable princes; equally faithleſs to their ſubjects, their allies, and their enemies: but are integrity, truth, and religion, for ever excluded from a throne? The paſt ages have ſeen many ſubjects diſtinguiſhed for their names, their offices, and the gifts of their ſovereign, betray their prince and country, and keep up the moſt criminal intelligence with the enemy; would you find juſt the maſter whom you ſerve with ſo much zeal and courage were he, merely upon ſuch grounds, to ſuſpect the truth of your fidelity? Why then is a ſuſpicion, which excites the indignation of all other deſcriptions of men, only ſupportable when directed againſt the pious? Why is a concluſion, ſo ridiculous in every other caſe, only judicious when againſt virtue? Doth the perfidy of a ſingle Judas give you grounds to conclude, that all the other diſciples were traitors, and without faith? Doth the hypocriſy of Simon the magician prove, that the converſion of the other diſciples who embraced faith was merely an artifice to accompliſh their own purpoſes; and that, like him, they walked not uprightly in the path of the Lord? What can be more unjuſt or fooliſh, than of the guilt of an individual, to conſtitute a general crime? It is difficult, I confeſs, but that vice may ſometimes aſſume the garb of virtue; that the angel of darkneſs may not ſometimes have the appearance of an angel of light; and that the paſſions which generally ſtrain every nerve to ſucceed, may not ſometimes call in the appearances of piety to their aid, particularly under a reign when piety, held in honour, is almoſt a certain road to fortune and favour. But it is the

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height of folly to reflect upon all virtue for the impious uſe which ſome individuals may make even of piety; and to believe that ſome abuſes diſcovered in an holy and venerable profeſſion univerſally diſhonour all who have embraced it. The truth, my brethren, is, that we hate all men who are not ſimilar to ourſelves; and that we are delighted to be enabled to condemn piety, becauſe piety itſelf condemns us.

But one has ſo often been deceived, ſay you. I confeſs it; but, in reply, I ſay, that, granting you are even deceived while refuſing to ſuſpect your brethren, and while rendering to a fictitious virtue that eſteem and honour which are due to real virtue alone: What would be the conſequence? By what would your credulity be followed, either ſorrowful or diſgraceful? You would have judged according to the rules of charity, which doth not eaſily believe in evil, and which delighteth in even the appearances of good; according to the rules of juſtice, which is incapable of every malignity or deed to others, which it would not wiſh to have done to itſelf; according to the rules of prudence, which judges only from what is viſible, and leaves to the Lord to judge of the intentions and thoughts; laſtly, according to the rules of goodneſs and humanity, which always oblige us to preſume in favour of our brethren. What would there be in ſuch a miſtake to alarm you? How noble for the mind when the deception proceeds from a motive of humanity and kindneſs! What honour do not ſuch miſtakes render to a good heart; for none but the virtuous and the ſincere are capable of them; but you, alas! not being ſuch, prefer that deception which degrades the virtuous and pious man from that eſtimation which is his due, to hazarding the chance of not covering the hypocrite with the ſhame he deſerves.

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But, beſides, whence ſprings this zeal and inveteracy againſt the abuſe, made by the hypocrite, of real virtue? Is the glory of God ſo warmly taken to heart by you, that you wiſh to avenge him on the impoſtors who diſhonour him? What matters it to you, who neither ſerve or love him, whether the Lord be ſerved by a double or a ſincere heart? What is there which can ſo ſtrongly intereſt you for the integrity or the hypocriſy of his worſhippers? You who know not how he is even worſhipped? Ah! were he the God of your heart; did you love him as your Lord and Father; were his glory dear to you, we might then indeed pardon, as an exceſs of zeal, the boldneſs with which you riſe up againſt the outrage done to God and his worſhip by the ſimulated piety of the hypocrite. The juſt, who love and ſerve him, are ſurely more entitled to cry out againſt an abuſe ſo injurious to ſincere piety; but you, who live like the pagans, who, ſunk in debauchery, are without hope, and whoſe whole life is one continued guilt, ah! it belongs little to you to take the intereſt of God's glory againſt the fictitious piety which is the cauſe of ſo much diſgrace and ſorrow to the church; whether he be faithfully ſerved, or merely through grimace, is no affair of yours. Whence then comes a zeal ſo much miſplaced? Would you wiſh to know? It is not the Lord whom you wiſh to avenge, nor is it his glory which intereſts you; it is the good name of the pious which you wiſh to ſtain; it is not hypocriſy which irritates your feelings, it is piety which diſpleaſes you; you are not the cenſurer of vice, you are only the enemy of virtue; in a word, you hate in the hypocrite only the reſemblance of the pious.

In effect, did your cenſures proceed from a fund of religion and true zeal, ah! with grief alone, would you recal the hiſtory of theſe impoſtors, who have ſometimes

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ſucceeded in deceiving the world. What do I ſay? Far from alledging to us, with an air of triumph, theſe examples, you would lament over the ſcandals with which they have afflicted the church; far from applauding yourſelves, when you renew their remembrance, you would wiſh that ſuch melancholy events were for ever effaced from the memory of men. The law curſed him who ſhould dare to uncover the ſhame and terpitude of thoſe who had given him life; but it is the ſhame and diſhonour of the church, your mother, which you expoſe with ſuch pleaſure to public deriſion. Do you carefully recal certain humiliating circumſtances to the houſe from which you ſpring, and which have formerly diſgraced the name and life of ſome one of your anceſtors? Would you not wiſh for ever to efface theſe hateful veſtiges of diſgrace from the hiſtories which hand them down to poſterity? Do you not conſider, as enemies to your name, thoſe who ranſack the paſt ages, in order to lay open theſe hateful particulars, and to revive them in the memory of men? Do you not in oppoſition to their malignity, loudly proclaim that maxim of equity, that faults are perſonal; and that it is unjuſt to attach the idea of diſhonour to all who bear your name, merely becauſe it has once been diſgraced through the bad conduct of and individual?

Apply the rule to yourſelf: the church is your houſe: the juſt alone are your relations, your brethern, your predeceſſors, your anceſtors: they alone compoſe that family of firſt-born, to whom you ought to be eternally united. The wicked ſhall one day be as though they had never been: The ties of nature, of blood, and of ſociety, which now unite you to them, ſhall periſh; an immeaſurable and an eternal chaos ſhall ſeparate them from the children of God; they ſhall no longer be your brethren, your fore-

father,

fathers, or your relatives; they ſhall be caſt out, forgotten, effaced from the land of the living, unneceſſary to the deſigns of God, cut off for ever from his kingdom, and no longer, by any tie, holding to the ſociety of the juſt, who ſhall then be your only brethren, your anceſtors, your people, your tribe. What do you then, when you uncover, with ſuch pleaſure, the ignominy of ſome falſe juſt who diſhonours their hiſtory? It is your houſe, your name, your relations, your anceſtors, whom you diſhonour: you come to ſtain the ſplendour of ſo many glorious actions, which, in all ages, have rendered their memory immortal by the infidelity of an individual, who, bearing the name they bear, ſtain it by manners and a conduct totally diſſimular: upon yourſelves then it is that you make the diſhonour fall; unleſs you have already renounced the ſociety of the holy, and prefer to aſſociate your eternal lot with that of the wicked and the unfaithful.

But what is more particularly abſurd in that temerity which is always ſo ready to judge and to blacken the intentions of the pious, is, that you thereby fall into the moſt ridiculous contradiction with yourſelves: laſt character of that temerity.

Yes, my brethren, you accuſe them of cunningly working towards their own point, of having their own views in the moſt holy actions, and of only acting the perſonage of virtue. But doth it become you, the inhabitants of a court, to make this reproach? Your whole life is a continual diſguiſe: you every where act a part which is not your own: you flatter thoſe whom you love not; you crouch to others whom you deſpiſe: you act the aſſiduous ſervant to thoſe from whom you have emolument to expect, though, in your heart, you look up with envy to their rank,

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and think them unworthy of their elevation: in a word, your whole life is an aſſumed character. Your heart, on every occaſion, belies your conduct; every where your countenance is a contradiction to your ſentiments; you are the hypocrites of the world, of ambition, of favour, and of fortune; and it well becomes you, after that, to accuſe the juſt of the ſame tricks, and ſo loudly to ring their diſſimulation and pretended hypocriſy when you ſhall have nothing in the ſame way with which to reproach yourſelves, then will we liſten to the temerity of your cenſures; or rather, you ſhall have reaſon to be jealous for the glory of artifice and meanneſs, and to be diſſatisfied, that the pious ſhould dare to interfere with a ſcience which ſo juſtly belongs, and is ſo eſpecially adapted to you.

Beſides, you ſo nervouſly clamour out againſt the world, when, too attentive to your actions, it maliciouſly interprets certain ſuſpicious aſſiduities, certain animated looks; you ſo loudly proclaim then, that, if things go on thus, no perſon will in future be innocent; that no woman in the world will be conſidered as a perſon of regular conduct; that nothing is more eaſy than to give an air of guilt to the moſt innocent things; that it will be neceſſary totally to baniſh one's ſelf from ſociety, and to deny one's ſelf every intercourſe with mankind; you then ſo feelingly declaim againſt the malignity of men, who, on the moſt trivial grounds, accuſe you of criminal intentions. But do the pious give juſter foundation for the ſuſpicions which you form againſt them? And, if it be permitted to you to hunt for guilt in them, though hidden under the appearances of virtue, why are you ſo enraged that the world ſhould dare to ſuppoſe it in you, and ſhould believe you criminal under the appearances of guilt?

Laſtly,

Laſtly, O wordly women ! when we reproach you with your aſſiduity at theatres and other places, where innocence encounters ſo many dangers, or the indecency and immodeſty of your dreſs, you reply that you have no bad intentions; that you wiſh injury to none; you would wiſh indecent and criminal actions to be paſſed over, for the ſake of a pretended innocency of intention, which your whole exterior belies; and you cannot paſs over to the pious, virtuous and laudable manners, for the ſake of an integrity of heart, to which every thing external bears ample teſtimony. You exact that they ſhall ſuppoſe your intentions pure when your works are not ſo; and you think yourſelves entitled to believe that the intentions of the pious are not innocent, when all their actions are viſibly ſo. Ceaſe, then, either to juſtify your own vices or to cenſure their virtues.

It is thus, my brethren, that every thing poiſons in our keeping, and that every thing removes us further from God: the ſpectacle even of virtue becomes to us a pretext for vice; and the examples themſelves of piety are rocks to our innocence. It would ſeem, O my God! that the world doth not ſufficiently furniſh us with opportunities for our ruin; that the examples of ſinners are not ſufficient to authoriſe our errors; for we ſeek a ſupport for them even in the virtues of the juſt.

But you will tell us that the world is not ſo far wrong in cenſuring thoſe who profeſs themſelves people of piety; that ſuch are every day ſeen, who, if poſſible, are more animated than other men in the purſuit of a worldly fortune, more eager after pleaſures, more delicate in ſubmitting to injury, more proud in elevation, and more attached to their own intereſts. This is the ſecond injuſtice of the

world towards the pious: not only does it maliciouſly interpret the intentions, which is a temerity, but it alſo ſcruiniſes their ſlighteſt imperfections, which is an inhumanity.

PART II. It may truly be ſaid that the world is a more rigid and ſeverer critic upon the pious than the goſpel itſelf; that it exacts a greater degree of perfection from them, and that their weakneſſes find leſs indulgence before the tribunal of men than they ſhall one day experience before the tribunal of God himſelf.

Now, I ſay, that this attention to exaggerate the ſlighteſt errors of the pious, ſecond injuſtice into which the world falls with regard to them, is an inhumanity, conſidering the weakneſs of man, the difficulty of virtue, and, laſtly, the maxims of the world itſelf. I entreat your attention here, my brethren.

Inhumanity, conſidering the weakneſs of man. Yes, my brethren, it is an illuſion to ſuppoſe that there are perfect virtues among men; it is not the condition of this mortal life: almoſt every one bears with him in piety, his faults, his humours, and his peculiar weakneſſes; grace corrects but does not overturn nature; the Spirit of God, which creates in us a new man, leaves ſtill many remains of the old; converſion terminates our vices, but does not extinguiſh our paſſions; in a word, it forms the Chriſtian within us, but it ſtill leaves us men. The moſt righteous, conſequently, ſtill preſerve many remains of the ſinner: David, that model of penitence, ſtill blended with his virtues a too great indulgence for his children, a ſecret pride at the number of his people, and the proſperity of his reign: the mother of Zebediah's children, in ſpite of faith, through which ſhe was ſo ſtrongly attached to Jeſus Chriſt, loſt nothing

thing of her anxiety for the elevation of her children, or of her concern towards procuring for them the firſt ſtations in an earthly kingdom: the apoſtles themſelves diſputed rank and precedency with each other: never ſhall we be diveſted of all theſe little weakneſſes till we are delivered from this body of death, which is the fountain from which they ſpring. The moſt ſhining virtue here below always, therefore, hath its ſpots and its flaws, which are not to be too narrowly examined; and the juſt muſt always in ſome points reſemble the reſt of men. All, then, that can be expected from human weakneſs is, that virtues riſe ſuperior to the vices, the good to the evil; that the eſſential be regulated, and that we inceſſantly labour towards regulating the reſt.

And ſurely, my brethren, overflowing with paſſions, as we are in the wretched condition of this life; loaded with a body of ſin, which oppreſſes the ſoul; ſlaves to our ſenſes and to the fleſh; bearing within us an eternal oppoſition to the law of God; the continual prey of a thouſand deſires which combat againſt our ſoul; the everlaſting ſport of our inconſtancy, and the natural inſtability of our heart; finding nothing within us but what is repugnant to duty; eagerly purſuing whatever removes us from God; diſguſted with every thing which brings us nearer to him; loving only what tends to our ruin; hating only what tends to our ſalvation: weak in good; always ripe for evil; and, in a word, finding in virtue the rock of virtue itſelf, is it to be wondered at, that men, ſurrounded, filled with ſo many miſeries, ſhould ſometimes allow ſome of them to be viſible; that men, ſo corrupted, ſhould not be always equally holy? And where you, in any meaſure, equitable, would you not rather find it worthy of admiration that ſome virtues ſtill remained, than worthy of cenſure they ſtill preſerve ſome vices?

Beſides,

Beſides, God hath his reaſons for ſtill leaving, to the moſt pious, certain ſenſible weakneſſes which ſtrike and offend you. In the firſt place, He thereby wiſheth to humble them, and to render their virtue more ſecure by concealing it even from themſelves. Secondly, He wiſheth to animate their vigilance, for he leaveth not Amorites in the land of Canaan, that is to ſay, paſſions in the heart of his ſervants, but, leſt, freed from all their enemies, they ſhould lull themſelves in idleneſs and in a dangerous ſecurity. Thirdly, He wiſheth to excite in them a continual deſire for the eternal land, and to render the exilement of this life more bitter through a proper ſenſe of thoſe miſeries from which they can never, here below, obtain a complete deliverance. Fourthly, Perhaps not to diſcourage ſinners by the ſight of too perfect a virtue, which might probably induce them to ceaſe every exertion, under the idea of never being able to attain it. Fifthly, In order to preſerve to the juſt a continual ſubject of prayer and penitence, by leaving them a continual ſource of ſin. Sixthly, To prevent thoſe exceſſive honours which the world would render to virtue were it pure and ſparkling, and leſt it ſhould find its recompenſe, in other words its rock, in the vain applauſes of men. What ſhall I laſtly ſay? It perhaps is, ſtill more to lull and to blindfold the enemies of piety; by the weakneſſes of the pious to ſtrengthen you, who liſten to me in the fooliſh opinion that there is no real virtue on the earth; to authoriſe you in your diſorders by the ſuppoſition that they are ſimilar to yourſelves; and to render unavailing to you all the pious examples of the juſt. You triumph in the weakneſſes of the pious; yet are their weakneſſes perhaps puniſhments from God on you, and means employed by his juſtice to nouriſh your unjuſt prepoſſeſſions againſt virtue, and completely to harden you in guilt. God is terrible in his judgments, and the conſummation

ſummation of iniquity, is, in general, the ſequel of iniquity itſelf.

But, 2*dly*, were your cenſures on thoſe weakneſſes, which may ſtill remain to the pious, not rendered barbarous and inhuman, when the natural weakneſs of man is conſidered, the difficulty alone of virtue would amply render them ſo.

For, candidly, my brethren, doth it appear ſo eaſy to you to live according to God, and to walk in the ſtraight path of ſalvation, that you ſhould become ſo implacable againſt the pious, from the moment that they err, but for an inſtant? Is it ſo eaſy, continually to renounce one's ſelf, to be ever guarded againſt one's own heart, to overcome its antipathies, to repreſs its likings, to lower its pride, and to fix its inconſtancy? Is it ſo eaſy a matter to reſtrain the ſallies of the mind, to moderate its judgments, to diſavow its ſuſpicions, to ſoften its keenneſs, and to ſmother its malignity? Is it ſo eaſy to be the eternal enemy of one's own body, to conquer its indolence, to mortify its taſtes, and to crucify its deſires? Is it ſo natural to pardon injuries, to bear with contempt, to love, and even to load with benefits thoſe who do evil to us, to ſacrifice one's fortune in order not to fail to his conſcience, to deny one's ſelf pleaſures to which all our inclinations lead us, to reſiſt example, and ſingly to maintain the cauſe of virtue againſt the multitude which condemns it? Do all theſe appear, in fact, ſo eaſy to you, that you deem thoſe who, for an inſtant, depart from them, unworthy of the leaſt indulgence? How feelingly do you expatiate every day on the difficulties of a Chriſtian life, when we propoſe to you theſe holy rules? Is it ſo very aſtoniſhing that, in a long march through rough and dangerous ways, a man ſhould

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ſometimes ſtumble, or even fall, through fatigue and weakneſs?

Inhuman that we are! And, neverthelefs, the ſlighteſt imperfection in the pious, deſtroys in our mind, all their moſt eſtimable qualities: far from excuſing their weakneſſes, in conſideration of their virtue, it is their virtue itſelf which renders us doubly cruel and inexorable to their weakneſſes. To be juſt, is ſufficient, it would appear, to forfeit every claim to indulgence: to their vices we are clear-ſighted; to their virtues we are blind; a moment of weakneſs effaces from our remembrance a whole life of fidelity and innocence.

But what renders your injuſtice towards the pious ſtill more cruel, is, that it is your own examples, your irregularities, and even your cenſures, which ſtagger, weaken, and force them ſometimes to imitate you; it is the corruption of your manners which becomes the continual and the moſt dangerous ſnare to their innocence; it is thoſe fooliſh deriſions with which you continually aſſault virtue, that force them reluctantly to ſhelter themſelves under the appearances of guilt. And how can you ſuppoſe it poſſible that the piety of the moſt righteous ſhould always preſerve itſelf pure, in the midſt of the preſent manners, in a perverſe world, whoſe cuſtoms are abuſes, and its communications crimes; where the paſſions are the only bond of ſociety, and where the wiſeſt and moſt virtuous are thoſe who retrench from guilt only its ſcandal and publicity? How can you ſuppoſe it poſſible, that, amidſt theſe eternal deriſions which ridicule the pious, which make them almoſt aſhamed of virtue, and often oblige them to counterfeit vice; that, in the midſt of ſo many diſorders, authoriſed by the public manners, by ſenſeleſs applauſes, by examples

examples rendered reſpectable by rank and dignity, by the ridicule caſt on thoſe who dare to heſitate at them, and, laſtly, by the weakneſs even of their own heart; how do you think it poſſible that the pious ſhould be always enabled to ſtem ſuch a torrent, and that, obliged continually to fortify themſelves againſt ſo rapid and ſo impetuous a courſe which hurries away the reſt of men, watchfulneſs and vigour ſhould not ſometimes fail them for an inſtant, and that they ſhould not ſometimes feel a momentary influence of the fatal vortex? You are their ſeducers; and you pretend to be diſpleaſed becauſe they allow themſelves to be ſeduced? No longer, therefore, reproach to them your ſcandals which weaken their faith, and which they ſhall one day reproach to you before the tribunal of Jeſus Chriſt; and triumph no more over their weakneſſes, which are your own work, and for which they ſhall afterwards demand vengeance againſt you.

I have alſo ſaid, that even your maxims cannot be excuſed from ſeverity and extravagance with reſpect to the pious. Judge from what I ſhall now repeat. You are continually ſaying, that ſuch an individual, with all his devotion, fails not, however, to proſecute his own deſigns; that another is very attentive in paying court to his ſuperiors; again, that a third has a piety ſo delicate and ſenſible, that the mereſt trifle wounds and ſhocks it; that ſuch an individual pardons nothing; that the other is not ſorry to be thought ſtill agreeable and amuſing; that a third has a very commodious piety, and lives a very eaſy and agreeable life; laſtly, that another is full of caprice and fancies, and that none of her houſhold can put up with her temper; ſuch are your daily diſcourſes; nor do your ſatires ſtop there, for you boldly decide from thence that a devotion, blended with ſo many faults, can never lead them to ſalvation:

tion: behold your maxims. Yet, nevertheleſs, when we announce to you, from this ſeat, that a worldly, idle, ſenſual, diſſipated, and almoſt wholly profane life, ſuch as you lead, can never be a way to ſalvation, you ſay that you cannot ſee any harm in it; you accuſe us of ſeverity, and of exaggerating the rules and duties of your ſtation; you do not believe that more is required for ſalvation. But, my brethren, to which ſide here do ſeverity and injuſtice belong? You condemn the pious, becauſe to their piety they add ſome particulars which reſemble you; becauſe they mingle ſome of your faults with an affinity of virtues and good works, which amply repair the errors: and you believe yourſelves in the path of ſalvation, you who have only their faults, without even the piety which purifies them? O man! who then art thou that thus pretendeſt to ſave thoſe whom the Lord condemneth, and to condemn thoſe whom he juſtifieth?

Nor is this all, and you ſhall immediately ſee how little, on this point, you are conſonant with yourſelves. In effect, when the pious live in total retirement, when, no longer keeping any meaſures with the world, they conceal themſelves from the eyes of the public; when they reſign certain places of emolument and diſtinction, and diveſt themſelves of all their employments and dignities, for the ſole purpoſe of attending to their ſalvation; when they lead a life of tears, prayer, mortification, and ſilence, (and happily our age hath furniſhed ſuch examples,) what have you then ſaid? That they carried matters too far; that violent counſels had been given them; that their zeal was not according to knowledge; that were all to imitate them, public duties would be neglected; that thoſe ſervices, incumbent on every citizen to his country and ſtate, would no longer be given; that ſuch an extreme of ſingularity is

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not required; and that real devotion proves itself, by living together and fulfilling the duties of their ſtation in which God hath placed us: ſuch are your maxims. But, on the other hand, when the virtuous unite with piety the duties of their ſtation, and the innocent intereſts of their fortune; when they ſtill keep up a certain degree of intercourſe and ſociety with the world, and ſhew themſelves in places from which their rank does not allow them to baniſh themſelves; when they ſtill partake in certain public pleaſures, which their ſtations renders inevitable; in a word, when they are prudent in good and ſimple in evil, ah! you then proclaim that they are made like other men; that it appears very eaſy to you, at that price, to ſerve God; that you ſee nothing in their devotion to frighten you; and that, if nothing more were required, you would ſoon be yourſelf a great ſaint. In vain may piety aſſume every appearance; it is ſufficient that it is piety to diſpleaſe and to merit your cenſures. Be conſiſtent with yourſelves; you would have the pious to reſemble yourſelves, yet you condemn them from the moment that you can trace a reſemblance.

The obſtinacy and injuſtice of the Jews, in our goſpel, are renewed in you. When John the Baptiſt appeared in the deſert, clothed in goats ſkins, neither eating or drinking, and holding out to Judea an auſterity of virtue which none of the preceding juſt, or prophets had ever equalled; they conſidered, ſays Jeſus Chriſt the auſterity of his manners as the illuſion of a falſe ſpirit, which ſeduced and urged him on to theſe exceſſes, merely that, in a wordly vanity, he might find the recompence of his penance. On the contrary, the Son of Man afterwards came, continues the Saviour, eating and drinking; exhibiting to them, in his conduct, the model of a virtue, more conſonant with human weakneſs, and ſerving as an example to all, by leading

a ſimple and ordinary life which all may imitate: Is he more ſheltered from their cenſures? Ah! They declaim againſt him, as being a man of pleaſure, and a lover of good cheer; and the bendings of his virtue are no longer, in their opinion, but a relaxation which ſtains and diſhonours it. The moſt diſſimilar virtues are ſucceſsful only in attracting the ſame reproaches. Ah! my brethren, how much to be pitied would the pious be, were they to be judged before the tribunal of men! But they know that that world, which ſits in judgment on them, is itſelf already judged.

And what in this ſeverity, with which you condemn the ſlighteſt imperfections of the pious, is more deplorable, is that, if a notorious and infamous ſinner, after a whole life of iniquity and crimes, but give on the bed of death, ſome weak proof of repentance; if he but pronounce the name of that God whom he has never known, and has always blaſphemed; if he at laſt conſent, after many delays and repugnances, to receive the laſt offices of the church which he formerly held in contempt; ah! you rank him among the ſaints; you maintain that he has died the death of a Chriſtian; that he has attained to the ſtate of repentance; and that he has entreated forgiveneſs and mercy from God; upon theſe grounds you hope every thing for his ſalvation, and you no longer entertain a doubt but that the Lord hath ſhewn him mercy; ſome reluctant marks of religion, which have been extorted from him, are ſufficient, in your idea, to ſecure to him the kingdom of God, into which nothing defiled ſhall ever enter; are ſufficient, I ſay, in ſpite of the exceſſes and abominations of his whole life; and an entire life of virtue is not ſufficient, in your opinion, to render it certain to a faithful ſoul, from the moment that he mingles the ſmalleſt infidelity with his paſt conduct:

conduct: you ſave the wicked on the moſt frivolous and equivocal appearances of piety; and you condemn the juſt on the ſlighteſt and moſt excuſable proofs of humanity and weakneſs.

I might add, my brethren, that, conſulting only your own intereſts, the imperfections of the pious ought to find you more indulgent and favourable.

For they alone, my brethren, ſpare you; they alone conceal your vices, ſmooth your faults, excuſe your errors, and, with pleaſure, dwell upon whatever may be praiſe-worthy in your virtue, while the world, your equals, your rivals, and your pretended friends, perhaps leſſen your talents and ſervices, ſpeak with contempt of all your good qualities, ridicule your defects, number your misfortunes amongſt your faults, exaggerate theſe very faults, and empoiſon your moſt innocent words and actions; the virtuous alone excuſe you, juſtify your heart, and are the apologiſts of your virtues, or the prudent diſſemblers of your vices; they alone break up thoſe converſations in which your glory and reputation are attacked; they alone refuſe to join with the public againſt you; and, for them alone, you are deſtitute of humanity, and to them alone, you cannot pardon, even the virtues which render them eſtimable. Ah! my brethren, return them at leaſt what they lend to you; ſpare your protectors and apologiſts, and, by decrying them, do not debilitate the only favourable teſtimony which is left for you among men.

But I ſpeak too gently; not only the pious refuſe to join with the malignity of the public againſt you, but they alone are your true friends; they alone are touched with your misfortunes, affected by your wanderings, and intereſted

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in your ſalvation; they carry you in their heart; while excuſing your paſſions and irregularities before men, they ſilently lament over them before God; they raiſe up their hands for you to heaven; they ſupplicate your converſion; they entreat forgiveneſs for your crimes; and you cannot bring yourſelves to render juſtice even to their piety and innocence? Ah! they make againſt you the ſame complaint to the Lord, that the prophet Jeremiah formerly made againſt the Jews of his time, unjuſt cenſures of his piety and conduct: "Give heed to me, O Lord," ſaid that man of God, "and hearken to the voice of them that "contend with me. Shall evil be recompenſed for good: "for they have digged a pit for my ſoul; remember that I "ſtood before thee to ſpeak good for them, and to turn "away thy wrath from them."

You are ſurely ſenſible, my brethren, of all the injuſtice of your conduct with regard to what I have been mentioning; but what would it be if, in completing what I had at firſt intended, I were to ſhew you, that not only you give corrupted motives to the good works of the pious, which is a temerity; not only you exaggerate their ſlighteſt weakneſſes, which is an inhumanity; but, likewiſe, when you have nothing to ſay againſt the probity of their intentions, and when their imperfections give no handle to your cenſures, that you fly to your laſt hold, that of caſting an air of ridicule over their virtue itſelf; which is an impiety.

Yes, my brethren, an impiety. You make a ſport, a comic ſcene of religion; you ſtill introduce it, like the pagans formerly, on an infamous theatre; and there you expoſe its holy myſteries, and all that is moſt ſacred and moſt reſpectable on the earth, to the laughter of the ſpectators.

tators. You may apologiſe for your paſſions, through the weakneſs of temperament and human frailty ; but your deriſions on virtue can find no excuſe but in the impious contempt of virtue itſelf ; nevertheleſs, this irreligious and blaſphemous mode of ſpeaking is now regarded as a pleaſantry, as a ſally of wit, and as a language from which vanity appropriates to itſelf peculiar honour.

But, my brethren, you thereby perſecute virtue, and render it uſeleſs to yourſelves ; you diſhonour virtue, and render it uſeleſs to others ; you try virtue, and render it inſupportable to itſelf.

You perſecute virtue, and render it uſeleſs to yourſelves. Yes, my dear hearer, the example of the pious was a mean of ſalvation provided for you by the goodneſs of God ; now, his juſtice, incenſed at your deriſions on his mercies to his ſervants, for ever withdraws them from you, and puniſhes your contempt of piety, by denying to you the gift of piety itſelf. The kings of the earth take ſignal vengeance on thoſe who dare to injure their ſtatues, for theſe are to be conſidered as public and ſacred monuments repreſenting themſelves. But the juſt, here below, are the living ſtatues of the great King, the real images of an holy God ; in them he hath expreſſed the majeſty of his pureſt and moſt reſplendid features ; and he for ever curſeth thoſe ſacrilegious and corrupted hearts who dare to make them a ſubject of deriſion and inſult.

Beſides, even granting that the Lord ſhould not deny to you the gift of piety in puniſhment of your deriſions, they ſtill form an invincible human barrier which will for ever exclude you from its cauſe. For I demand ; if, when tired of the world, of your diſorders, of yourſelf, you

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wiſh to return to God, and to ſave that ſoul which you now labour to deſtroy, how ſhall you dare to declare for piety, you who have ſo often made it the butt of your public and profane pleaſantries? How ſhall you ever boaſt of the duties of religion, you, who are every day heard to ſay, that, to become devout, is, in other words, to ſay, that the ſenſes are loſt; that ſuch an individual had a thouſand good qualities which rendered his ſociety agreeable to all; but that devotion has now altered him to ſuch a degree, that he is fully as inſupportable as he was formerly pleaſing; that he affects to make himſelf ridiculous; that we muſt renounce common ſenſe before we can erect, it would appear, the ſtandard of piety; that, may God preſerve you from ſuch madneſs; that you endeavour to be an honeſt man, but, God be praiſed, you are no devotee. What language! That is to ſay, that God be praiſed you are already marked with the ſtamp of the reprobate; that with confidence you can ſay to yourſelf: "I ſhall never alter, but ſhall die exactly ſuch as I am." What impiety! And yet it is among Chriſtians that ſuch diſcourſes are every day oſtentatiouſly, and with apparent ſatisfaction, repeated.

Ah! my brethren, permit my ſorrow to vent itſelf here in one reflection. The patriarchs, thoſe men ſo venerable, ſo powerful, even according to the world, never had communication with the kings and nations of the different countries where they were conducted by the order of the Lord, but in the following religious terms: "I fear the Lord." They claimed no reſpect from the grandeur of their race, whoſe origin was almoſt coeval with the world itſelf, from the luſtre of their anceſtors, from the ſplendour of the blood of Abraham, that man, the conqueror of kings, the model of all the ſages of the earth, and the only hero of whom the world could then boaſt. "We fear

the Lord." Behold their moſt pompous title, their moſt auguſt nobility, the only character by which they wiſhed to be diſtinguiſhed from other men: ſuch was the magnificent ſign which appeared at the head of their tents and flocks, which ſhone on their ſtandards, and every where bore with them the glory of their name, and that of the God of their fathers. And we, my brethren, we ſhun the reputation of a man juſt and fearing God, as a title of reproach and ſhame; we pompouſly dwell upon the vain diſtinctions of rank and birth; wherever we go, the frivolous mark of our names and dignities precede and announce us; and we hide the glorious ſign of the God of our fathers; we even glorify ourſelves, in not being among the number of thoſe who fear and adore him. O God! leave then to theſe fooliſh men a glory ſo hedious; confound their folly and impiety, by permitting them to the end to glorify themſelves in their confuſion and ignominy.

Nor is this all. By theſe deplorable deriſions not only do you render virtue uſeleſs to yourſelves, but you likewiſe render it odious and uſeleſs to others; that is to ſay, that not only do you bar againſt yourſelves every path which leads to God, but you likewiſe ſhut it againſt an infinity of ſouls, whom grace ſtill urges in ſecret to relinquiſh their crimes, and to live in a Chriſtian manner; who dare not declare themſelves, leſt they ſhould be expoſed to the laſh of your ſatire and profane railleries; who, in a new life, dread only the ridicule which you caſt upon virtue; who, in ſecret, oppoſe only that ſingle obſtacle to the voice of Heaven which calls upon them; and tremblingly heſitate, in the grand affair of eternity, betwixt the judgments of God and your ſenſeleſs and impious deriſions.

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That is to ſay, that you thereby blaſt the fruit of that goſpel which we announce, and render our miniſtry unavailing; you deprive religion of its terrors and majeſty, and ſpread through the whole exterior of piety a ridicule which falls upon religion itſelf. You perpetuate in the world, and ſupport among men thoſe prejudices againſt virtue, and that univerſal illuſion employed by ſatan to deceive them, which is that of treating piety as perverſe and a folly; you authoriſe the blaſphemies of free-thinkers and of the wicked; you accuſtom ſinners to arrogate to themſelves an oſtentatious glory from vice and irregularity, and to conſider debauchery as faſhionable and genteel when contraſted with the ridicule of virtue. What indeed may I not ſay? Through your means piety becomes the fable of the world, the ſport of the wicked, the ſhame of ſinners, the ſcandal of the weak, and the rock even of the juſt; through you vice is held in honour, virtue is debaſed, truth is weakened, faith is extinguiſhed, religion is annihilated, and corruption univerſally ſpreads; and, as foretold by the prophet, deſolation perſeveres even to the conſummation and to the end.

Let me likewiſe add, that, through you, virtue becomes inſupportable to itſelf; your deriſions become a rock to the piety even of the juſt; you ſhake their faith; you diſcourage their zeal; you ſuſpend their good deſires; you ſtifle in their heart the livelieſt impreſſions of grace; you ſtop them in a thouſand deeds of fervour and virtue, which they dare not expoſe to the impiety of your cenſures; in ſpite of themſelves, you force them to conform to your habits and maxims, which they deteſt, to abate from their retirement, their mortifications, and their prayers; and to conſecrate to theſe duties only thoſe concealed moments which may eſcape your knowledge and railleries; through theſe means,

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you deprive the church of their edifying example; you deprive the weak of thoſe ſuccours which they would otherwiſe find there; ſinners of that ſhame with which their preſence would cover them; the juſt of that conſolation which would animate them; and religion of a ſight which would do it honour.

Alas, my brethren! In former ages tyrants never derided Chriſtians, but in reproaching to them their pretended ſuperſtitions: they ridiculed the public honours which they ſaw them render to Jeſus Chriſt, a perſon crucified, and the preference which was given to him by Chriſtians, over Jupiter and all the gods in the empire, whoſe worſhip was become reſpectable through the pomp and magnificence of their temples and altars, the antiquity of the laws, and the majeſty of the Cæſars: but, on the other hand, they beſtowed loud and public praiſes on their manners; they admired their modeſty, frugality, charity, patience, innocent and mortified life, and their abſence from theatres, or every other place of public amuſement; they could not, without veneration, regard the wiſe, retired, modeſt, humble, and benevolent manners of thoſe ſimple and faithful believers. You, on the contrary, more ſenſeleſs, find no fault with them for adoring Jeſus Chriſt, and for placing their confidence and hope of ſalvation in the myſtery of the croſs; but you find it ridiculous that they ſhould deny themſelves every public pleaſure; that they ſhould live in the practice of retirement, mortification, and prayer; but you find them worthy of your deriſion and cenſure, becauſe they are humble, ſimple, chaſte, and modeſt: and the Chriſtian life, which found admirers and panegyriſts even among tyrants, experiences from you only mockery and profane railleries.

What folly, my brethren! to find worthy of laughter in the world, which is itſelf but a maſs of trifles and abſurdities, only thoſe who know its frivolity, and whoſe only thoughts are bent on placing themſelves ſecure from the wrath to come! What folly, to deſpiſe in men the very qualities which render them pleaſing to God, reſpectable to angels, and uſeful to their fellow-creatures! What folly, to be convinced that an eternal happineſs or miſery awaits us, yet to find ridiculous only thoſe who are intereſted in ſo important an affair!

Let us hold virtue in reſpect, my brethren, it alone on the earth, merits our admiration and praiſe. If we find ourſelves ſtill too weak to fulfil its duties, let us at leaſt be equitable, and eſteem its luſtre and innocence; if we cannot live the life of the juſt, let us wiſh to attain it, let us envy their lot; if we cannot as yet imitate their example, let us conſider every deriſion on virtue not only as a blaſphemy againſt the holy Spirit, but as an outrage on humanity which virtue alone honours and dignifies; far from reproaching the Godly with thoſe virtues which render them diſſimilar to us, let us reproach ourſelves with the vices which prevent us from reſembling them; in a word, let us, by a true and ſincere reſpect for piety, deſerve to obtain one day the gift of piety itſelf.

And you, my brethren, who ſerve the Lord, remember, that the intereſts of virtue are in your hands; that the weakneſſes, the ſtains with which you blend it, become, as I may ſay, ſtains on religion itſelf; conſider how much the world expects from you, and what engagements you contract towards the public, when you eſpouſe the cauſe of piety; conſider with what dignity, what fidelity, what reſpectability you ought to ſupport the character and perſonage

ſonage of a ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt. Yes, my brethren, let us, with majeſty, ſupport the intereſts of piety, againſt the ſneers of thoſe who deſpiſe it; let us purchaſe the right of being inſenſible to their cenſures, by giving no foundation for them; let us force the world to reſpect what it cannot love; let us not, of the holy profeſſion of piety, make a ſordid gain, a vile worldly intereſt, a life of ill-nature and caprice, a claim to effeminacy and idleneſs, a ſingularity from which we arrogate honour, a prejudice, a ſpirit of intolerance which flatters us, and a ſpirit of diviſion which ſeparates us from our fellow-creatures; let us make it the price of eternity, the path to heaven, the rule of our duties, and the reparation of our crimes; a ſpirit of modeſty which makes us unaſſuming, a compunction which humbles us, a gentleneſs which draws us to our brethren, a charity which makes us bear with them, an indulgence which attracts their regard, a ſpirit of peace which ties us to them; and, laſtly, an union of hearts, of deſires, of affections, of good and evil on the earth, which ſhall be the fore-runner and hope of that eternal union which charity is to conſummate in heaven.

SERMON

SERMON V.

RESPECT IN THE TEMPLES OF GOD.

MATTHEW xxi. 12.

And Jeſus went into the temple of God, and caſt out all them that ſold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the ſeats of them that ſold doves.

WHENCE comes this aſpect of zeal and of indignation which Jeſus Chriſt, on this occaſion, allows his countenance to betray? Is this then that King of Peace who was to appear in Sion armed with his meekneſs alone? We have ſeen him ſitting as Judge over an adultreſs, and he hath not even condemned her. We have ſeen at his feet the proſtitute of the city, and he hath graciouſly forgiven her debaucheries and ſcandals. His diſciples wanted the fire of heaven to deſcend upon an ungrateful and perverſe city, but he reproached them with being ſtill unacquainted with that new ſpirit of mercy and of charity which he came to ſpread throughout the earth. He hath juſt been lamenting with tears the miſeries which threaten Jeruſalem, that criminal city, the murdereſs of the prophets, which is on the eve of ſealing the ſentence of her reprobation by the iniquitous death ſhe is ſo ſoon to inflict on him whom God had ſent to be her Redeemer. On every occaſion he hath appeared feeling and merciful; and, in conſequence of the exceſs

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of his meekneſs, he hath been called the friend even of publicans and ſinners.

What then are the outrages which now triumph over all his clemency, and arm his gracious hands with the rod of juſtice and of wrath? The holy temple is profaned; his Father's houſe is diſhonoured; the place of prayer and the ſacred aſylum of the penitent is turned into a houſe of traffic and of avarice: this is what calls the lightning into thoſe eyes which would wiſh to caſt only looks of compaſſion upon ſinners. Behold what obliges him to terminate a miniſtry of love and of reconciliation, by a ſtep of ſeverity and of wrath ſimilar to that with which he had opened it. For remark, that what Jeſus Chriſt doth here, in terminating his career, he had already done when, after thirty-three years of a private life, he entered for the firſt time into Jeruſalem, there to open his miſſion, and to do the work of his Father. It might be ſaid that he had himſelf forgotten that ſpirit of meekneſs and of long-ſuffering which was to diſtinguiſh his miniſtry from that of the ancient covenant, and under which he was announced by the prophets.

Many other ſcandals, beſides thoſe ſeen in the temple, doubtleſs took place in that city, and were perhaps no leſs worthy of the zeal and the chaſtiſement of the Saviour; but, as if his Father's glory had been leſs wounded by them, he can conceal them for a time, and delay their puniſhment. He burſts not forth at once againſt the hypocriſy of the phariſees, and the corruption of the ſcribes and prieſts; but the chaſtiſement of the profaners of the temple can admit of no delay; his zeal on this occaſion admits of no bounds; and ſcarcely is he entered into Jeruſalem when he flies to the holy place, to avenge the honour of his Father there inſulted, and the glory of his houſe which they diſhonour.

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Of all crimes, in effect, by which the greatneſs of God is inſulted, I ſee almoſt none more deſerving of his chaſtiſements than the profanations of his temples; and they are ſo much the more criminal, as the diſpoſitions required of us by religion, when aſſiſting there, ought to be more holy.

For, my brethren, ſince our temples are a new heaven, where God dwelleth with men, they require the ſame diſpoſitions of us as thoſe of the bleſſed in the heavenly temple; that is to ſay, that the earthly altar, being the ſame as that of heaven, and the Lamb, who offers himſelf and is ſacrificed there, being the ſame, the diſpoſitions of thoſe around him ought to be alike. Now, the firſt diſpoſition of the bleſſed before the throne of God and the altar of the Lamb, is a diſpoſition of purity and innocence. The ſecond, a diſpoſition of religion and internal humiliation. Thirdly, and laſtly, a diſpoſition even of decency and of modeſty in dreſs. Three diſpoſitions which compriſe all the feelings of faith with which we ought to enter the temples of God; a diſpoſition of purity and innocence; a diſpoſition of adoration and internal humiliation; a diſpoſition even of external decency and modeſty in dreſs.

PART I. The whole univerſe is a temple, which God filleth with his glory and with his preſence. Wherever we go, ſays the apoſtle, he is always beſide us; in him we live, move, and have our being. If we mount up to the heavens, he is there; if we plunge to the centre, there we ſhall find him; if we traverſe the ocean on the wings of the winds, it is his hand that guides us; and he is alike the God of the diſtant iſles which know him not, as of the kingdoms and regions which invoke his name.

Nevertheleſs,

Nevertheleſs, in all times, men have conſecrated places to him which he hath honoured with a ſpecial preſence. The patriarchs erected altars to him on certain ſpots where he had appeared. The Iſraelites, in the deſert conſidered the tabernacle as the place in which his glory and his preſence continually reſided; and, come afterwards to Jeruſalem, they no more invoked him with the ſolemnity of incenſe and of victims, but in that auguſt temple erected to him by Solomon. It was the firſt temple conſecrated by men to the true God. It was the moſt holy place in the univerſe; the only one where it was permitted to offer up gifts and ſacrifices to the Lord. From all quarters of the earth the Iſraelites were obliged to come there to worſhip him; captives in foreign kingdoms, their eyes, their wiſhes, and their homages were inceſſantly bent towards the holy place; in the midſt of Babylon, Jeruſalem and her temple were always the ſource of their delight, of their regrets, and the object of their worſhip and of their prayers; and Daniel choſe to expoſe himſelf to all the fury of the lions, rather than to fail in that pious duty, and to deprive himſelf of that conſolation. Jeruſalem indeed had often ſeen infidel princes, attracted by the ſanctity and the fame of her temple, coming to render homage to a God whom they knew not; and Alexander himſelf, ſtruck with the majeſty of that place, and with the auguſt gravity of its venerable pontiff, remembered that he was man, and bowed his proud head before the god of hoſts whom they there worſhipped.

At the birth of the goſpel, the houſes of belivers were at firſt domeſtic churches. The cruelty of tyrants obliged thoſe firſt diſciples of faith to ſeek obſcure and hidden places, to conceal them from the rage of the perſecutions, there to celebrate the holy myſteries, and to invoke the name of the Lord. The majeſty of the ceremonies enter-

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ed into the church only with that of the Cefars: Religion had its Davids and its Solomons who bluſhed to inhabit ſuperb palaces, while the Lord hath not whereon to lay his head: ſumptuous edifices gradually roſe up in our cities: the God of heaven and of the earth again, if I dare to ſay ſo, reſumed his rights; and the temples themſelves where the demon had ſo long been invoked, were reſtored to him as to their rightful maſter, conſecrated to his worſhip, and became his dwelling place.

But here they are no more empty temples like that of Jeruſalem, where every thing took place figuratively. The Lord ſtill dwelt in the heavens, ſaid the prophet, and his throne was ſtill above the clouds; but ſince he hath deigned to appear upon the earth, to hold converſe with men, and to leave us, in the myſtical benedictions, the real pledge of his body and of his blood, actually contained under theſe ſacred ſigns, the heavenly altar hath no longer any advantage over ours; the victim which we there immolate is the Lamb of God; the bread in which we participate is the immortal food of the angels and bleſſed ſpirits; the myſtical wine we there drink is that new beverage with which they make glad in the kingdom of the heavenly Father; the ſacred canticle we there ſing, is that which the celeſtial harmony makes continually to reſound around the throne of the Lamb; laſtly, our temples are thoſe new heavens promiſed by the prophet to men. We ſee not fully there, it is true, all that is ſeen in the heavenly Jeruſalem, for here below we ſee only myſtically, and, as it were, through a veil; but we poſſeſs him, we enjoy him, and heaven hath no longer any advantage over the earth.

Now, I ſay, that our temples being a new heaven, filled with the glory and the preſence of the Lord, innocence and purity

purity are the firſt diſpoſition by which we are entitled, like the bleſſed in the eternal temple, to appear there; for the God, before whom we appear, is an holy God.

In effect, my brethren, the ſanctity of God, ſpread throughout the univerſe, is one of the greateſt motives held out by religion to induce us every where to walk before him in purity and in innocence. As all creatures are ſanctified by the intimate reſidence of the divinity who dwelleth in them, and all places are full of his glory and immenſity, the divine writings inceſſantly warn us every where to reſpect the preſence of God who ſeeth and who watcheth us; on no occaſion to offer any thing to his eyes which may wound the ſanctity of his regards; and not to ſully with our crimes that earth which wholly is his temple and the dwelling-place of his glory. The ſinner, who bears an impure conſcience, is therefore a kind of profanet unworthy of living upon the earth; for, by the ſole ſituation of his corrupted heart, he every where diſhonours the preſence of the holy God who is ever beſide him, and he profanes every ſpot where he bears his crimes, for all places are ſanctified through the immenſity of the God who filleth and conſecrateth them.

But, if the univerſal preſence of God be a reaſon why we ſhould every where appear pure and without ſtain to his eyes, doubtleſs thoſe places which in that univerſe, are particularly conſecrated to him, our temples, in which the divinity, as I may ſay, corporeally reſides, much more require that we ſhould appear in them pure and without ſtain, leſt the ſanctity of the God who filleth and dwelleth in them be diſhonoured.

Thus, when the Lord had permitted Solomon to erect, to his glory that temple ſo famed for its magnificence, and ſo venerable through the ſplendour of its worſhip and the majeſty of its ceremonies, what rigid precautions did he not take, leſt men ſhould abuſe his goodneſs in chooſing a ſpecial dwelling-place amid them, and leſt they ſhould dare to appear there, in his preſence, covered with ſtains and defilements! What barriers did he not place betwixt himſelf, as I may ſay, and man; and, in drawing near to us, what an interval did not his holineſs leave betwixt the ſpot filled with his preſence, and the eyes of the people who came to invoke him!

Yes, my brethren, hear a deſcription of it. Within the circle of that vaſt edifice which Solomon conſecrated to the majeſty of the God of his fathers, the Lord choſe, for the place of his abode, only the moſt retired and the moſt inacceſſible ſpot; that was the holy of holies, that is to ſay, the ſole ſpot of that immenſe temple which was regarded as the dwelling-place and the temple of the Lord upon the earth. And, beſides, what terrible precautions defended its entry! An outer and far diſtant wall ſurrounded it; and there, the gentiles and foreigners, who wiſhed to be inſtructed in the law, could only approach. Secondly, Another wall very diſtant concealed it; and there the Iſraelites alone were entitled to enter; yet was it neceſſary that they ſhould be free from ſtain, and that they had carefully purified themſelves, through ſtated faſtings and ablutions, before they ſhould dare to approach a place ſtill ſo diſtant from the holy of holies. Thirdly, Another wall more advanced ſtill ſeparated it from the reſt of the temple; and there the prieſts alone entered every day to offer ſacrifices, and to renew the ſacred loaves expoſed upon the altar. The law required that every other Iſraelite who ſhould dare to

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approach it ſhould be ſtoned as a ſacrilegious profaner; and even a king of Iſrael, who thought himſelf entitled, through his regal dignity, to come there to offer up incenſe, was inſtantly covered with leproſy, degraded from his royalty, and excluded for the reſt of his life from all ſociety and commerce with men. Laſtly, After ſo many barriers and ſeparations appeared the holy of holies; that place, ſo terrible and ſo concealed, covered with an impenetrable veil, inacceſſible to every mortal, to every righteous, to every prophet, even to every miniſter of the Lord, the ſovereign pontiff alone excepted; and, even he was entitled to appear there only once in the year, after a thouſand ſtrict and religious precautions, and bearing in his hand the blood of the victim for which alone the gates of that ſacred place were opened.

Yet, after all, what did that holy of holies, that ſpot ſo formidable and ſo inacceſſible, contain? The tables of the law, the manna, the rod of Aaron; empty figures, and the ſhadows of futurity: The holy God himſelf, who ſometimes gave out from thence his oracles, yet dwelt not there as in the ſanctuary of Chriſtians, the gates of which are indiſcriminately opened to every believer.

Now, my brethren, if the goodneſs of God, in a law of love and grace, hath no longer placed theſe terrible barriers betwixt him and us, if he hath deſtroyed that wall of ſeparation which removed him ſo far from man, and hath permitted to every believer to approach the holy of holies, where he himſelf now dwelleth, it is not that his ſanctity exacts leſs purity and innocence of thoſe who come to preſent themſelves before him. His deſign hath only been to render us more pure, more holy, and more faithful, and to make us feel what ought to be the ſanctity of a Chriſtian,

ſeeing he is every day obliged to ſupport at the foot of the altar, and of the terrible ſanctuary, the preſence of the God whom he invokes and whom he worſhips.

And for this reaſon it is that Peter calls all Chriſtians an holy nation; for they are equally entitled to preſent themſelves before the holy altar; a choſen generation, for they are all ſeparated from the world and from every profane cuſtom, conſecrated to the Lord, and ſolely deſtined to his worſhip and to his ſervice; and, laſtly, a royal prieſthood, for they all participate, in one ſenſe, in the prieſthood of his Son, the High Prieſt of the new law, and becauſe the privilege of entering into the holy of holies, formerly granted to the ſovereign pontiff alone, is become as the common and daily right of every believer.

It is ſolely through the ſanctity, then, of our baptiſm and of our conſecration, that theſe ſacred gates are open to us. If impure, we, in ſome reſpect, forfeit this right; we have no longer a part in the altar; we are no longer worthy of the aſſembly of the holy, and the temple of God is no longer for us.

Our temples, my brethren, ought therefore to be the houſe of the righteous alone. Every thing that takes place there ſuppoſes righteouſneſs and ſanctity in the ſpectators; the myſteries which we there celebrate are holy and awful myſteries, and which require pure eyes; the victim we there offer up is the reconciliation of the penitent, or the bread of the ſtrong and perfect; the ſacred anthems heard there are the groanings of a contrite heart, or the ſighs of a chaſte and believing ſoul. And on this account it is that the church takes care to purify even every thing that is to appear on the altar: ſhe conſecrates with prayers even the

the ſtones of theſe holy buildings, as if to render them worthy of ſuſtaining the preſence and the looks of the God who dwelleth in them: ſhe expoſes at the doors of our temples a water ſanctified by prayers, and recommends to believers to ſprinkle it over their heads before they enter into the holy place, as if to complete their purification from any ſlight ſtains which might ſtill remain; leſt the ſanctity of the God before whom they come to appear ſhould be injured by them.

Formerly, the church permitted not, within the circle of her ſacred walls, even tombs to the bodies of believers: ſhe received not into that holy ſpot the ſpoils of their mortality: ſhe did not believe that the temple of God, that new heaven filled with his preſence and glory, ſhould ſerve as an aſylum to the aſhes of thoſe whom ſhe numbered not as yet among the bleſſed.

The public penitents themſelves were, for a long time, excluded from aſſiſting at the holy myſteries. Proſtrated at the doors of the temple, covered with hair-cloth and aſhes, even the aſſembly of believers was denied to them equally as to the anathematiſed; their tears and their mortifications alone could at length open to them theſe ſacred gates. And what delight, when, after having groaned for, and ſupplicated their reconciliation, they found themſelves in the temple among their brethren; they once more beheld thoſe altars, that ſanctuary, thoſe miniſters ſo deeply engaged in the awful myſteries; they heard their names pronounced at the altar with thoſe of the believers, and ſung with them hymns and holy ſongs! What tears of rapture and of religion were then not ſhed! What regret for having ſo long deprived themſelves of ſo ſweet a conſolation! a ſingle day, O my God, paſſed in thy holy houſe,

houſe, cried they no doubt with the prophet, is more conſoling to the heart, than whole years ſpent in pleaſure, and in the tents of the wicked! Such were formerly the temples of Chriſtians. Far from theſe ſacred walls, ſaid then the miniſter with a loud voice to all the aſſembly of believers, far from theſe ſacred walls be the unclean, the impure, the worſhippers of idols, and whoſoever loveth or maketh a lie.

The church, it is true, no longer makes this rigorous diſcrimination. The multitude of believers, and the depravation of manners, having rendered it impoſſible, ſhe opens the gates of our temples indifferently to the righteous, and to ſinners: ſhe draws the veil of her ſanctuary in preſence even of the profane: and, in order to begin the awful myſteries, her miniſters no longer wait the departure of the ſinful and unclean. But the church ſuppoſes, that, if you be not righteous in coming here to appear before the majeſty of a God ſo holy, you bring with you at leaſt deſires of righteouſneſs and of penitence: ſhe ſuppoſes, that, if not yet altogether purified from your crimes, you at leaſt feel contrition for them; that you come to lament them at the foot of the altar; and that your confuſion and the ſincere regret of your faults, are now to begin here your juſtification and your innocence.

If ſinners, it is your deſires towards a more Chriſtian life which alone can authoriſe your appearing in this holy place; and, if you come not here to lament over your crimes, but bring with you, even to the foot of the altar, the will, and the actual and rooted affection for them, the church, it is true, who ſees not, nor judges the heart, excludes you not from theſe ſacred walls; but God inviſibly rejecteth you. In his eyes you are accurſed and excommunicated,

municated, and have no right in the altar, or in the ſacrifices; you are one who comes to ſtain, by your ſole preſence, the ſanctity of the awful myſteries, to ſeat yourſelf in a place where you have no right to be ſeated, and from whence the angel of the Lord, who watches at the gate of the temple inviſibly chaſes you, as he formerly chaſed the firſt ſinner from that place of innocence and of ſanctity, which the Lord ſanctified with his preſence.

And in effect, to feel guilty of the moſt ſhameful crimes, and to come to appear here in the moſt holy place of the earth; to come to appear before God, without being at leaſt touched with ſhame and ſorrow, without thinking at leaſt upon the means of quitting ſo deplorable a ſituation, without at leaſt wiſhing it, forming ſome ſentiments of religion; to bring even to the foot of the altar defiled bodies and ſouls; to force the eyes even of God, as I may ſay, to familiariſe themſelves with guilt, without at leaſt confeſſing to him the ſorrow of thus appearing before him covered with ſhame and reproach, and ſaying to him like Peter; "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a ſinful man;" or, like the prophet, "Hide thy face from my ſins, and "blot out all mine iniquities," that I may be worthy of appearing here in thy preſence, is to profane the temple of God, to inſult his glory and majeſty, and the ſanctity of his myſteries.

For, my dear hearer, be whom ye may who come to aſſiſt here, you come to offer up ſpiritually with the prieſt the awful ſacrifice: you come to preſent to God the blood of his Son, as the propitiation of your ſins: you come to appeaſe his juſtice, through the dignity and the excellence of theſe holy offerings; and to repreſent to him the claim which you have upon his mercies, ever ſince the blood of his

his Son hath purified you; and that you no longer form in one ſenſe with him, but one ſame prieſt, and one ſame victim. Now, when you appear with an hardened and corrupted heart, without any ſentiment of faith, or any deſire of amendment, you diſavow the miniſtry of the prieſt who offers in your ſtead: you diſavow the prayers he ſends up to the Lord, in which, through the mouth of the prieſt, you entreat him to caſt his propitious looks on thoſe holy offerings which are upon the altar, and to accept of them as the price of the abolition of your crimes: you even inſult the love of Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, who renews the grand object of your redemption, and who preſents you to his Father as a portion of that pure and ſpotleſs church which he hath waſhed in his blood: you inſult the piety of the church, who, believiug you united in her faith and in her charity, places in your mouth, through the hymns which accompany the holy myſteries, ſentiments of religion, of ſorrow, and of penitence: Laſtly, You deceive the faith and the piety of the righteous there preſent, and who, conſidering you as forming with them only one heart, one mind, and one ſame ſacrifice, join themſelves with you, and offer to the Lord your faith, your deſires, your prayers as their own. You are there, then, as an anathematiſed, ſeparated from all the reſt of your brethren; an impoſtor, who ſecretly diſavow what you are publicly profeſſing, and who come to inſult religion, and to reject all ſhare in the redemption and in the ſacrifice of Jeſus Chriſt, in the very moment that he is renewing the memory, and offering up the price of it to his Father.

What are we thence to conclude? That, if a ſinner, we are to baniſh ourſelves from our temples, and from the holy myſteries? God forbid. Ah! then it is that we ought to come to this holy place in ſearch of our deliverance; then

then it is that we ought to come to ſolicit, at the foot of the altar, the tender mercies of the Lord, ever ready in that place to lend a favourable ear to ſinners; then it is that we ought to call in every religious aid held out to faith, to arouſe in ourſelves, if poſſible, ſome ſentiments of piety and of repentance. And whither, O my brethren, ſhall we fly, when unhappily fallen under the diſpleaſure of God! And what other reſource could remain for us? It is here alone that ſinners can find a refuge: here flow the quickening waters of the ſacrament, which alone have the virtue of purifying the conſcience: here the ſacrifice of propitiation is offered up for them, alone capable of appeaſing the juſtice of God, which their crimes have irritated: here the truths of ſalvation, enforced upon their heart, inſpire them with hatred againſt ſin and love of righteouſneſs: here their ignorance is enlightened, their errors diſſipated, their weakneſs ſuſtained, their good deſires ſtrengthened: here, in a word, religion offers remedies for all their ills. It is ſinners, therefore, who ought moſt to frequent theſe holy temples; and the more their wounds are inveterate and hopeleſs, the more eagerly ought they to fly here in ſearch of a cure.

Such is the firſt diſpoſition of innocence and of purity, which the preſence here of an holy God requires of us, as of the bleſſed in heaven: "For they are without fault be-"fore the throne of God."

But if the ſole ſtate of guilt, without remorſe, without any wiſh for a change, and with an actual intention of perſevering in it, be a kind of irreverence, by which the ſanctity of our temples and of our myſteries is profaned; what, O my God! ſhall it be to chooſe theſe holy places, and the hour of the awful myſteries, to come to inſpire infamous paſ-

ſions; to permit themſelves impure looks; to form criminal deſires; to ſeek opportunities which decency alone prevents them from ſeeking elſewhere; to meet objects whom the vigilance of thoſe who inſtruct us keeps at a diſtance in all other reſorts? What ſhall it be to make inſtrumental to guilt, what in religion is moſt holy; to chooſe thy preſence, great God! to conceal the ſecret of an impure paſſion, and to make thy holy temple a rendezvous of iniquity, a place more dangerous than even thoſe aſſemblies of ſin which religion interdicts to believers? What guilt, to come to crucify afreſh Jeſus Chriſt in the very place where he offers himſelf up for us every day to his Father! What guilt, to employ, in order to forward our own ruin, the very hour in which the myſteries of ſalvation, and the redemption of all men, are operated! What madneſs, to come to chooſe the eyes of our Judge to render him the witneſs of our crimes, and of his preſence to make the moſt horrible cauſe of our condemnation! What a neglect of God, and what a mark of reprobation to change the ſacred aſylums of our reconciliation into opportunities of debauchery and licenticuſneſs!

Great God! when inſulted on mount Calvary, where thou wert ſtill a ſuffering God, the tombs opened around Jeruſalem; the dead aroſe, as if to reproach to their deſcendants the horror of their ſacrilege. Ah! reanimate then the aſhes of our fathers who await, in this holy temple, the bleſſed immortality; let their bodies riſe out of theſe pompous tombs which our vanity hath erected to them; and, inflamed with an holy indignation againſt irreverences which crucify thee afreſh, and which profane the ſacred aſylum of the remains of their mortality, let them appear upon theſe monuments; and ſince our inſtructions and our threatenings are unavailing, let them come themſelves

ſelves to reproach to their ſucceſſors their irreligion and their ſacrileges. But if the terror of thy preſence, O my God! be ſufficient to retain them in reſpect, were the dead even to riſe up, as thou haſt formerly ſaid, they would, in conſequence of it, be neither more religious nor more believing.

But if the prefence of an holy God require here, as of the bleſſed in heaven, a diſpoſition of purity and innocence; the preſence of a God, terrible and full of majeſty, requires one of dread and of internal collection: Second diſpoſition, marked by the profound humiliation of the bleſſed in the heavenly temple; "And they fell before the "throne on their faces, and worſhipped God."

PART II. God is ſpirit and truth, and it is in ſpirit and in truth that he requireth principally to be honoured. That diſpoſition of profound humiliation, which we owe to him in our temples, conſiſts not, therefore, ſolely in the external poſture of our bodies; it alſo compriſes, like that of the bleſſed in heaven, a ſpirit of adoration, of praiſe, of prayer, and of thankſgiving; and ſuch is that ſpirit of religion and of humiliation which God demandeth of us in the holy temple, ſimilar to that of the bleſſed in the heavenly temple.

I ſay a ſpirit of adoration; for as it is here that God manifeſteth his wonders and his ſupreme greatneſs, and deſcendeth from heaven to receive our homages, the firſt ſentiment which ſhould be formed within us on entering into this holy place, is a ſentiment of terror, of ſilence, and profound recollection, of internal humiliation, on viewing the majeſty of the moſt High and our own meanneſs; to be occupied with God alone who ſheweth himſelf to us, to

feel

feel all the weight of his glory and of his preſence; to collect all our attention, all our thoughts, all our deſires, our whole ſoul, to pay him the homage of it, and to caſt it wholly at the feet of the God whom we worſhip; to forget all the grandeurs of the earth; to ſee only him, to be occupied only with him; and, by our profound humiliation, to confeſs, like the bleſſed in heaven, that he alone is almighty, alone immortal, alone great, alone worthy of all our love and of our homages.

But, alas! my brethren, Where, in our temples are thoſe reſpectful ſouls, who, ſeized with an holy dread at the ſight of theſe ſacred places, feel all the weight of the majeſty of the God who dwelleth in them, and are incapable of ſupporting the ſplendour of his preſence, otherwiſe than in the immobility of an humiliated body and the profound religion of a ſoul who adores? Where are thoſe who, loſing ſight of all the grandeurs of the earth, are here occupied with that of God alone? Let us boldly ſay it before a king whoſe profound reſpect, at the feet of the altar, does equal honour to religion and to himſelf; it is not to honour the God who dwelleth here, that too many enter into this holy temple; it is to cover themſelves with the cloak of piety, and to make it inſtrumental towards views and intereſts, which ſincere piety condemns; they come to bow their knee, as Haman bowed it before the profane altar, to attract the regards, and to follow the example of the prince who worſhips; they come there to ſeek another God than he who appears on our altars; to make their court to another maſter than the ſupreme Maſter; to ſeek other favours than the grace of Heaven, and to attract the kindneſs of another pay-maſter than the immortal Rewarder. Amid a crowd of worſhippers he is an unknown God in his own temple, as he formerly was in the pagan Athens.

Every

Every look here is for the prince who hath none himſelf, but for God; all wiſhes are addreſſed to him; and his profound humiliation at the foot of the altar, far from teaching us to reſpect here the Lord, before whom a great king bows his head and forgets all his greatneſs, teaches us only to take advantage of his religion, and of the favours with which he honours virtue, to adopt their ſemblance, and, through that deception, to exalt ourſelves to new degrees of greatneſs upon the earth. O my God! is not this what thou announcedſt to thy diſciples; that times would come when faith ſhould be extinguiſhed, when piety would become an infamous traffic, and when men, living without God upon the earth, would no longer acknowledge thee, but in order to make thee ſubſervient to their iniquitous deſires?

A ſpirit of prayer is alſo compriſed in this diſpoſition of humiliation; for the more we are ſtruck here with the greatneſs and with the power of the God whom we worſhip, the more do our endleſs wants warn us to have recourſe to him, from whom alone we can obtain relief and deliverance from them. Thus the temple is the houſe of prayer, where every one ought to come to lay his ſecret wants before the Lord; where, in public calamities, he is appeaſed by the general prayers; where the aſſembled miniſters lift up their hands for the ſins of the people, and where the eyes of the Lord are ever open to our wants, and his ears attentive to our cries.

Not but we may addreſs ourſelves to him, as the apoſtle ſays, in every place; but the temple is the ſpot where he is more propitious, and where he hath promiſed to be always preſent to receive our homages, and to lend a favourable ear to our requeſts. Yes, my brethren, it is here that

that we ought to come to join in lamentation with the church, over the ſcandals with which ſhe is afflicted, over the diviſions with which ſhe is torn, and over the dangers which ſurround her; over the obſtinacy of ſinners, and the coldneſs of charity among believers; we come with her to ſolicit the mercies of the Lord upon his people; to intreat of him the ceſſation of wars and other public ſcourges; the extinction of ſchiſms and errors; the knowledge and the love of righteouſneſs and of truth for ſinners; and perſeverance for the juſt. You ought, therefore, to come with an attentive and collected mind, a prepared heart, and which offers nothing to the eyes of God that may avert the favours ſolicited by the church for you, and to appear with that exterior of a ſuppliant, which, of itſelf, ſhews that he prays and that he worſhips.

Nevertheleſs, my brethren, while the miniſters are lifting up their hands here for you; are ſupplicating the Lord for the proſperity of your families, for abundance to your lands, for the preſervation of your relations and children, who perhaps expoſe themſelves for the welfare of their country, for the end of wars, diſſentions, and all the miſeries with which we are afflicted; while they are intreating remedies for your backſlidings, and aids for your weakneſs; while they are ſpeaking to the holy God in your favour, you deign not even to accompany their prayers with your attention and your reſpect. You diſhonour the holy gravity of the church's lamentations by a ſpirit of inattention, and by indecencies which would hardly become even thoſe criminal reſorts where you liſten to profane ſongs; and the only difference in your behaviour is that, in the one, you are touched and rendered attentive by a laſcivious harmony, while here you endure with impatience,

ſence, the divine ſongs in thankſgiving and in praiſe of the Lord.

Thus, my brethren, in place of the public prayers arreſting the arm of the Lord, ſo long impending over our heads; in place of the ſupplications, which reſound in every part of our temples, being able, as formerly, to ſuſpend the ſcourges of Heaven, to bring back days of peace and of tranquillity, to reconcile nations and kings, and to attract peace from heaven to the earth; alas! the days of evil ſtill endure; the times of trouble, of mourning, and of deſolation ceaſe not; war and fury ſeem to have for ever taken up their abode among men; the deſolate widow demands her huſband; the afflicted father in vain look out for his child; brother is divided from brother; even our ſucceſſes ſhed mourning and ſorrow through our families, and we are forced to weep over our own victories. Whence comes this? Ah! it is that the prayers of the church, the only ſources of the favours which God ſheddeth upon kingdoms and upon empires, are no longer liſtened to; and that you force the Lord, through the irreverence with which you accompany them, to avert his ears, and turn his attention from them, and which thereby renders them uſeleſs to the earth.

But, not only ought you to appear here as ſuppliants, and in a ſpirit of prayer, ſince it is here that the Lord dealeth out his favours and his grace; as it is here, likewiſe, that every thing renews to you the remembrance of thoſe already received; you ought alſo to bring here a ſpirit of gratitude and of thankſgiving, ſeeing that, on whichever way you turn your eyes, that every thing recalls to you the remembrance of God's bleſſings, and the ſight of his eternal mercies upon your ſoul.

And,

And, firſtly, it is here where, in the ſacrament by which we are regenerated, you have become believers: it is here that the goodneſs of God, in aſſociating you, through baptiſm, to the hope of Jeſus Chriſt, hath diſcerned you from ſo many heathens who know him not: it is here that you have engaged your faith to the Lord; your written promiſes are ſtill preſerved under the altar. Here is the book of the covenant which you have made with the God of your fathers: you ſhould no longer, then, appear there, but to ratify the engagements of your baptiſm, and to thank the Lord for the ineſtimable bleſſing which hath aſſociated you with his people, and honoured you with the name of Chriſtian; you ought to feel all the tenderneſs and reſpect of a child, for the bleſſed womb which hath brought you forth in Jeſus Chriſt, and the glory of this houſe ought to be your glory.

What are you then, when, in place of bringing your thankſgivings to the feet of the altar for ſo ſingular and ſo diſtinguiſhed a bleſſing, you come to diſhonour it by your irreverences? You are an unnatural child, who profane the place of your birth according to faith; a perfidious Chriſtian, who come to retract your promiſes before the very altars which witneſſed them: who come to break the treaty on the ſacred ſpot where it was concluded; to blot yourſelf out of the book of life, where your name was written with thoſe of the faithful; to abjure the religion of Jeſus Chriſt on the very fonts where you had received it; to make a pompous diſplay of all the vanities of the age, at the feet of the altar where you had ſolemnly renounced them; and to profeſs worldlineſs where you made profeſſion of Chriſtianity.

Nor

Nor is this all; for, ſecondly, it is here that Jeſus Chriſt hath ſo often ſaid to you, through the mouth of his miniſters, "My ſon, thy ſins are forgiven thee; go, and "ſin no more, leſt a worſe thing befal thee." It is here that, melting in tears, you have ſo often ſaid to him, "Fa-"ther, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and before thee." Now, my brethren, on every ſpot where you have ſo often experienced the grace of forgiveneſs, not only you forget the bleſſing, but you come to give new ſubject of offence; on the very ſpot where you have ſo often appeared penitent, you proclaim yourſelves ſtill worldly and profane. Ah! Far from coming to theſe holy tribunals to recapitulate the diſorders of your life; far from coming to renew thoſe promiſes of penitence, thoſe ſentiments of compunction, thoſe emotions of ſhame and of confuſion, of which they have ſo often been the depoſitories; you boldly appear before them with an unbluſhing countenance, your eyes wandering here and there, full, perhaps, of guilt and adultery, as the apoſtle ſays, to renew in their preſence the ſame infidelities that your tears had once expiated, and to render them ocular witneſſes of the ſame prevarications, of which they had been the ſecret confidents and the bleſſed purgers!

What more ſhall I ſay, my brethren? In the third place, the temple is the houſe of doctrine and of truth; and it is here that, through the mouth of the paſtors, the church announces to you the maxims of ſalvation, and the myſteries of the heavenly kingdom, concealed from ſo many infidel nations; freſh motive of gratitude on your part. But, alas! It is rather a freſh ſubject of condemnation; and, even here, where, from theſe Chriſtian pulpits, we are continually telling you from Jeſus Chriſt, that the unclean ſhall never enjoy the kingdom of heaven, you

come to form profane deſires; even here, where you are warned that you ſhall, one day, have to render an account of an idle word, you permit yourſelves criminal ones: Laſtly, even here, where you ſo often hear repeated that evil to him that ſcandalizeth, you become yourſelf, a ſtumbling-block, and a ſubject of ſcandal. Thus, my brethren, why do you believe that the word of the goſpel, which we preach to princes and to the grandees of the earth, is no longer but a tinkling braſs, and that our miniſtry is now become almoſt unneceſſary? It may be that our private weakneſſes place a bar to the fruit, and to the progreſs of the goſpel, and that God bleſs not a miniſtry, the miniſters of which are not pleaſing in his ſight: But, beſides this reaſon, ſo humiliating for us, and which we cannot, however, either diſſemble from you, or even conceal from ourſelves; it is, doubtleſs, the profanation of the temples, and the indecent and diſreſpectful manner in which you liſten to us, that deprive the word, of which we are the miniſters, of all its energy and virtue. The Lord, eſtranged, from this holy place through your profanations, no longer giveth increaſe to our toils, nor ſheddeth his grace, which alone cauſeth his doctrine and his word to fructify: He no longer looketh upon theſe aſſemblies, formerly ſo holy, but as an aſſembly of worldly-minded, of voluptuous, of ambitious, and of profane. And how would you that he turn not his countenance from them, and that the word of his goſpel fructify there. Reconcile, in the firſt place, with him, by your homages, by your collected behaviour, and your piety, theſe houſes of the doctrine and of truth: then will he compenſate for our deficiencies; he will open your hearts to our inſtructions, and his word ſhall no longer return empty to him.

But

But a final reaſon, which renders your irreverential behaviour ſtill more criminal and more diſgraceful to religion, is, that it is in the temple where you come to offer up, in one ſenſe with the prieſt, the awful ſacrifice, to renew the oblation of the croſs, and to preſent to God the blood of his Son as the propitiation of your ſins. Now, my brethren, while myſteries ſo auguſt are celebrating; during theſe awful moments when heaven opens above our altars; in a time when the affair of your ſalvation is agitated between Jeſus Chriſt and his Father; while the blood of the Lamb is flowing upon the altar to waſh you from ſtain; while the angels of heaven trembled and adore; while the ſolemnity of the miniſters, the majeſty of the ceremonies, and even the piety of the true believers, all inſpire fear, gratitude, and reſpect, ſcarcely do you bow the knee, ſcarcely do you caſt a look upon the holy altar, where myſteries ſo bleſſed for you are conſummating; it is even with reluctance that you are in the temple; you meaſure the durations and the fatiguing length of the ſalutary ſacrifice; you count the moments of time ſo precious to the earth, and ſo replete with wonders and grace for men. You who are ſo embarraſſed with your time, who ſacrifice it to an eternal inutility and circle of nothings, and who are even difficulted, in contriving to kill it; you complain of the pious ſolemnity of the miniſter, and of the circumſpection with which he treats the holy things? Ah! you require ſuch reſpect and ſuch precaution in thoſe who ſerve you; and you would that a prieſt clothed in all his dignity, that a prieſt repreſenting Jeſus Chriſt, and performing his office of mediator and high-prieſt with his Father, ſhould treat the holy myſteries with precipitation, and diſhonour the preſence of the God whom he ſerves, and whom he immolates, by a ſhameful careleſsneſs and haſte? In what times, O my God, are we come? And was it to be expected that thy

thy moſt precious and moſt ſignal kindneſſes ſhould become a burden to the Chriſtians of our ages ?

Alas ! the firſt believers, who met in the temple at ſtated hours of the day, to celebrate in hymns and ſongs with their paſtor the praiſes of the Lord, they almoſt never quitted theſe ſacred abodes, and that only with regret, when obliged to attend to the affairs of the age, and to the duties of their ſtation. How beautiful my brethren, to ſee in thoſe happy times the holy aſſembly of believers in the houſe of prayer, each in the place adapted to his ſtation; on one ſide, the recluſe, the holy confeſſors, the common believers; on the other, the virgins, the widows, the married women, all attentive to the holy myſteries, all beholding with tears of joy and of religion to flow upon the altar, the blood ſtill reeking, as I may ſay, of the Lamb, and ſo lately crucified before their eyes; praying for the princes, for the Cæſars, for their perſecutors, for their brethren, mutually exhorting each other to martyrdom, taſting all the conſolation of the divine writings explained by their holy paſtors, and retracing in the church of the the earth, the joy, the peace, the innocence, and the profound meditation of the heavenly church ! How beautiful and ſplendid were then the tents of Jacob, although the church was yet under oppreſſion and obſcurity; and the enemies of faith, even the prophets of the idols, in viewing their good order, their innocence and their majeſty, with what difficulty did they refuſe to them their admiration and their homages ! Alas ! and at preſent the rapid moments which you conſecrate here to religion, and which ought to ſanctify the remainder of the day, often become themſelves the greateſt guilt of it.

Laſtly, my brethren, to all theſe inward diſpoſitions of prayer, of adoration, and of gratitude, which the ſanctity of

of our temples exacts of you, there is likewiſe to be added, the external modeſty, and the decency of ornaments and of dreſs; laſt diſpoſition of the bleſſed in the heavenly temple: but on this part I ſhall be very brief.

And in effect, ſhould any inſtruction on our part be neceſſary to you on this point, O worldly women? for it is you whom this part of my diſcourſe principally regards. To what purpoſe all that diſplay, I ſay not only of oſtentation and of vanity, but of immodeſty and of impudence, with which you make your appearance in this houſe of tears and of prayer? Do you come here to diſpute with Jeſus Chriſt, the looks and the homages of thoſe who worſhip him? Do you come here to inſult the myſteries which operate the ſalvation of believers, by ſeeking to corrupt their heart at the feet even of the altars, where theſe myſteries take place for them? Are you determined that innocence ſhall in no place of the earth not even in the temple, that aſylum of religion and piety, be protected from your profane and laſcivious nakedneſs? Doth the world not ſufficiently furniſh you with impure theatres, with aſſemblies of diſſipation, where you may make a boaſt of being a ſtumbling-block to your brethren? Even your houſes, open to diſſipation and to riot, do they not ſuffice for you to figure with an indecency which would formerly have been ſuited only to houſes of debauchery and of guilt; and which is the cauſe that, not reſpecting yourſelves, that reſpect is loſt for you, of which the national politeneſs hath always been ſo jealous; for modeſty alone is eſtimable, as St. Paul formerly reproached to believers. Muſt the holy temple be alſo ſtained by your immodeſties? Ah! when you appear before your earthly ſovereign, you mark, by the dignity and by the propriety of your deportment, the reſpect which you know to be due to his preſence; and,

and, before the Sovereign of heaven and of earth, you make your appearance, not only without precaution, but even without decency or modeſty: and you diſplay under his eyes an effrontery, which wounds even the eyes of the wiſe and reſpectable! You come to diſturb the attention of the believers who had expected to have found here a place of peace and of ſilence, and an aſylum againſt all the objects of vanity; to diſturb even the deep meditation and the holy gravity of the miniſters, and to ſully, by the indecency of your dreſs, the purity of their looks attentive to the holy things.

Thus the apoſtle deſired, that the Chriſtian women ſhould be covered with a veil in the temple, on account of the angels, that is to ſay, of the prieſts, who are continually preſent there before God, and whoſe innocence and purity ought to equal that of the heavenly ſpirits. True it is, that thou hereby warneſt us, O my God, what ought, in our temples, to be the holy gravity, and the inviolable collection of thy miniſters; that it is for us to bear here, ſtamped upon our countenance, the holy dread of the myſteries which we offer up, and the lively and intimate ſenſe of thy preſence: that it is for us to inſpire here the people around us with reſpect, by the ſole appearance of our modeſty: that it is for us not to appear around the altar, and employed in the holy miniſtry, often more wearied, more careleſs, and more in haſte than even the aſſiſting multitude: and not to authoriſe their irreverences by our own. For, O my God! the deſolation of the holy place hath commenced with the ſanctuary itſelf; the reſpect of the people there hath become weakened only in conſequence of being no longer ſupported by the holy gravity of the worſhip, and the majeſty of the ceremonies; and thy houſe hath begun to be a houſe of diſſipation and of ſcandal,

only

only ſince thy miniſters have made of it a houſe of traffic, of wearineſs, and of avarice. But our examples, in authoriſing your profanations, do not excuſe them, my brethren.

And, in effect, it ſeems that God hath never left them unpuniſhed. The ſhameful indecencies of the children of Levi, which had ſo long profaned his houſe, were followed with the moſt diſmal calamities: the holy ark became a prey to the Philiſtines; it was placed at the ſide of Dagon in an infamous temple; the glory of Iſrael was blaſted; the Lord withdrew himſelf from amidſt his people; the lamp of Judah was extinguiſhed; there was no high-prieſt, and Jacob was, all of a ſudden, without altar and without ſacrifice.

There is little doubt, my brethren, but that the miſeries of the laſt age have been the fatal conſequences of the profanations and of the irreverences of our fathers. It was juſt that the Lord ſhould abandon temples where he had ſo long been inſulted. Dread, my brethren, leſt we prepare for our poſterity the ſame calamities, in imitating the diſorders of thoſe who have preceded us. Dread, leſt an irritated God ſhould one day abandon theſe temples which we profane, and leſt they, in their turn, become the aſylum of error. What do I know but that he is already preparing all theſe evils for us, in permitting the purity and the ſimplicity of faith to be adulterated in the minds, in multiplying thoſe men ſo wiſe in their own conceit, and ſo common in this age, who meaſure every thing by the lights of a weak reaſon, who would wiſh to fathom the ſecrecies of God, and who, far from making religion the ſubject of their worſhip and of their thankſgivings, make it the ſubject of their doubts and their cenſures? Thou art

terrible

terrible in thy judgments, O my God! and thy puniſhments are ſometimes ſo much the more rigorous, as they are tardy and ſlow.

Let us reflect then, my brethren on all theſe grand motives of religion; let us bring into this holy place a tender and an attentive piety, a ſpirit of piety, of compunction, of collection, of thankſgiving, of adoration, and of praiſe; let us never quit our temples without bearing from them ſome new grace, ſince here is the throne of mercy from whence they are ſhed upon men; never quit them without an additional reliſh for heaven, without new deſires of terminating your errors, and of attaching yourſelves ſolely to God; without envying the happineſs of thoſe who ſerve him, who have it in their power to be continually worſhipping him at the feet of the altar, and whoſe ſtation and functions particularly conſecrate them to this holy miniſtry. Say to him, as the queen of Sheba formerly ſaid to Solomon, "Happy are thy men, happy are theſe thy ſervants, "which ſtand continually before thee, and that hear thy wiſdom." And ſhould the duties of your ſtation not permit you to come here to worſhip the Lord at the different hours of the day, when his miniſters aſſemble to praiſe him; ah! continually turn, at leaſt, towards the holy place, like the Iſraelites formerly, your longings and your deſires. Let our temples be the ſweeteſt conſolation of your troubles, the only aſylum of your afflictions, the only reſource of your wants, the moſt certain recreation from the confinements, the fatiguing attentions, and the painful ſubjections of the world: in a word, find there the beginnings of that inalterable peace, the plenitude and the conſummation of which you will find only with the bleſſed, in the eternal temple of the heavenly Jeruſalem.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

THE TRUTH OF RELIGION.

MATTHEW viii. 10.

Verily I ſay unto you, I have not found ſo great faith, no not in Iſrael.

WHENCE came then the incredulity with which Jeſus Chriſt at preſent reproaches the Jews; and what cauſe could they ſtill have for doubting the ſanctity of his doctrine and the truth of his miniſtry? They had demanded miracles, and, before their eyes, he had wrought ſuch evident ones, that no perſon before him had done the like. They had wiſhed that this miſſion were authoriſed by teſtimonies; Moſes and the prophets had amply born them to him; the precurſor had openly proclaimed, Behold the Chriſt and the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world; a gentile renders glory in our goſpel to his almightineſs; the heavenly Father had declared from on high, that it was his well-beloved Son; laſtly, the demons themſelves, ſtruck with his ſanctity, quitted the bodies, in confeſſing that he was the Holy, and the Son of the living God. What could the incredulity of the Jews ſtill oppoſe to ſo many proofs and prodigies?

Behold, my brethren, what, with much greater ſurpriſe, might be demanded at thoſe unbelieving minds, who, after

the fulfilment of all that had been foretold, after the conſummation of the myſteries of Jeſus Chriſt, the exaltation of his name, the manifeſtation of his gifts, the calling of his people, the deſtruction of idols, the converſion of Ceſars, and the agreement of the univerſe, ſtill doubt, and take upon themſelves to confute and to overthrow what the toils of the apoſtolic men, the blood of ſo many martyrs, the prodigies of ſo many ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt, the writings of ſo many great men, the auſterities of ſo many holy anchorites, and the religion of ſeventeen hundred years, have ſo univerſally and ſo divinely eſtabliſhed in the mind of almoſt all people.

For, my brethren, amid all the triumphs of faith, children of unbelief ſtill privately ſpring up among us, whom God hath delivered up to the vanity of their own thoughts, and who blaſpheme what they know not; impious men, who change, as the apoſtle ſays, the grace of our God into wantonneſs, defile their fleſh, contemn all rule, blaſpheme majeſty, corrupt all their ways like the animals not gifted with reaſon, and are ſet apart to ſerve one day as an example of the awful judgments of God upon men.

Now if, among ſo many believers aſſembled here through religion, any ſoul of this deſcription ſhould happen to be, allow me, you, my brethren, who preſerve with reſpect the ſacred truſt of the doctrine which you have received from your anceſtors and from your paſtors, to ſeize this opportunity, either of undeceiving them, or of confuting their incredulity. Allow me for once, to do here what the firſt paſtors of the church ſo often did before their aſſembled people, that is to ſay, to take upon myſelf the defence of the religion of Jeſus Chriſt againſt unbelief; and, before entering into the particulars of your duties during this

this long term, allow me to begin by laying the firſt foundations of faith. It is ſo conſoling for thoſe who believe to find how reaſonable their ſubmiſſion is, and to be convinced that faith, which is apparently the rock of reaſon, is however its only conſolation, guide, and refuge!

Here then is my whole deſign. The unbeliver refuſes ſubmiſſion to the revealed truths, either through a vain affectation of reaſon, or through a falſe ſentiment of pride, or through an ill-placed love of independance.

Now, I mean at preſent to ſhew, that the ſubmiſſion which the unbeliever refuſes, through a vain affectation of reaſon, is the moſt prudent uſe which he can make even of reaſon; that the ſubmiſſion which he refuſes through a falſe ſentiment of pride, is the moſt glorious ſtep of it; and, laſtly, that the ſubmiſſion which he rejects through an ill-placed love of independance, is the moſt indiſpenſable ſacrifice of it. And from thence I ſhall draw the three great characters of religion: It is reaſonable, it is glorious, it is neceſſary.

O my Saviour, eternal author and finiſher of our faith, defend thyſelf, thy doctrine. Suffer not that thy croſs, by which the univerſe hath been ſubmitted to thee, be ſtill the folly and the ſcandal of proud minds. Once more triumph at preſent, through the ſecret wonders of thy grace, over that ſame unbelief which thou formerly triumpheaſt over through the ſtriking operations of thy power; and by thoſe lively lights, which enlighten hearts, more efficacious than all our diſcourſes, deſtroy every ſentiment of pride which may ſtill riſe up againſt the knowledge of thy myſteries.

PART I. Let us begin with admitting that it is faith, and not reaſon, which makes Chriſtians; and that the firſt ſtep exacted of a diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt, is to captivate his mind, and to believe what he may not comprehend. Nevertheleſs, I ſay, that we are led to that ſubmiſſion by reaſon itſelf; that the more even our lights are ſuperior, the more do they point out the neceſſity of our ſubmiſſion; and that unbelief, far from being the party of ſtrength of mind, and of reaſon, is, on the contrary, that of error and weakneſs.

In faith, reaſon hath therefore its uſes, and it hath its limits: and as the law, good and holy in itſelf, ſerved however only to conduct to Jeſus Chriſt, and there ſtopped as at its term; in the ſame way reaſon, good and juſt in itſelf, ſince it is the gift of God, and a participation of the ſovereign reaſon, ought only to ſerve, and is given to us for the ſole purpoſe of preparing the way for faith. It is forward, and quits the bounds of its firſt inſtitution, when it attempts to go beyond theſe ſacred limits.

This taken for granted, let us ſee which of the two, viz. the believer or the unbeliever, makes the moſt prudent uſe of his reaſon. Submiſſion to things held out to our belief, perhaps ſuſpected of credulity, either on the ſide of the authority which propoſes them; if it be light, it is weakneſs to give credit to them; or on the ſide of the things of which they wiſh to perſuade us; if they be in oppoſition to the principles of equity, of honour, of ſociety, and of conſcience, it is ignorance to receive them as true; or laſtly, on the ſide of the motives which are employed to perſuade us; if they be vain, frivolous, and incapable of determining a wiſe mind, it is imprudence to give way to them. Now, it is eaſy to prove that the authority which

which exacts the ſubmiſſion of the believer, is the greateſt, the moſt reſpectable, and the beſt eſtabliſhed, which can poſſibly be upon the earth; that the truths propoſed to his belief are the only ones conformable to the principles of equity, of honour, of ſociety, and of conſcience; and, laſtly, that the motives employed to perſuade him are the moſt deciſive, the moſt triumphant, and the moſt proper to gain ſubmiſſion from the leaſt credulous minds.

When I ſpeak of the authority of the Chriſtian religion, I do not pretend to confine the extent of that term to the ſingle authority of its holy aſſemblies, in which, through the mouths of its paſtors, the church makes deciſions and holds out to all believers the infallible rules of worſhip and of doctrine. As it is not hereſy, but unbelief, which this diſcourſe concerns, I do not here ſo much conſider religion as oppoſed to the ſects which the ſpirit of error hath ſeparated from the unity, that is to ſay, as confined to the ſole catholic church, but as forming, ſince the beginning of the world, a ſociety apart, ſole depoſitary of the knowledge of a God, and of the promiſe of a Mediator; always oppoſed to all the religions which have ſince ariſen in the univerſe; always contradicted and always the ſame; and I ſay that its authority bears along with it ſuch ſhining characters of truth, that it is impoſſible, without folly, to refuſe ſubmiſſion to it.

In the firſt place, in matter of religion, antiquity is a character which reaſon reſpects; and we may ſay, that a prepoſſeſſion is already formed in favour of that belief, conſecrated by the religion of the firſt men, and by the ſimplicity of the primitive times. Not but what falſehood is often decked out with the ſame titles, and that old errors exiſt among men, which ſeem to conteſt the antiquity

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of their origin with the truth; but it is not difficult to whoever wiſhes to trace their hiſtory, to go back even to their origin. Novelty is always the conſtant and moſt inſeparable character of error: and the reproach of the prophet may alike be made to them all: "They ſacrifice to new gods "that come newly up, whom their fathers feared not."

In effect, if there be a true religion upon the earth it muſt be the moſt ancient of all; for, if there be a true religion upon the earth, it muſt be the firſt and the moſt eſſential duty of man towards the God who wiſhes to be honoured with it. This duty muſt therefore be equally ancient as man; and, as it is attached to his nature, it muſt, as I may ſay, be born with him. And this, my brethren, is the firſt character by which the religion of chriſtians is at once diſtinguiſhed from ſuperſtitions and ſects. It is the moſt ancient religion in the world. The firſt men, before that an impious worſhip was carved out of divinities of wood and of ſtone, worſhipped the ſame God whom we adore, raiſed up altars and offered ſacrifices to him, expected from his liberality the reward of their virtue, and from his juſtice the puniſhment of their diſobedience. The hiſtory of the birth of this religion, is the hiſtory of the birth of the world itſelf. The divine books which have preſerved it down to us, contain the firſt monuments of the origin of things. They are themſelves more ancient than all thoſe fabulous productions of the human mind, which afterwards ſo miſerably amuſed the credulity of the following ages; and as error ever ſprings from the truth, and is only a faulty imitation of it, all the fables of paganiſm are founded on ſome of the principal features of that divine hiſtory; in ſo much that it may be affirmed that every thing, even to error itſelf, renders homage to the antiquity and to the authority of our holy ſcriptures.

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Now, my brethren, is there not already ſomething reſpectable in this character alone? The other religions, which have vaunted a more ancient origin, have produced nothing, in ſupport of their antiquity, but fabulous legends, which ſunk into nothing of themſelves. They have disfigured the hiſtory of the world by a chaos of innumerable and imaginary ages, of which no event hath been left to poſterity, and which the hiſtory of the world hath never known. The authors of theſe groſs fictions did not write till many ages after the actions which they relate, and it is ſaying every thing to add, that that theology was the fruit of poeſy; and the inventions of that art, the moſt ſolid foundations of their religion.

Here, it is a train of facts, reaſonable, natural, and in agreement with itſelf. It is the hiſtory of a family continued from its firſt head down to him who writes it, and authenticated in all its circumſtances. It is a genealogy in which every chief is characteriſed by his own actions, by events which ſtill ſubſiſted then, by marks which were ſtill known in the places where they had dwelt. It is a living tradition, the moſt authenticated upon the earth, ſince Moſes hath written only what he had heard from the children of the patriarchs, and they related only what their fathers had ſeen. Every part of it is coherent, hangs properly together, and tends to clear up the whole. The features are not copied, nor the adventures drawn from elſewhere, and accommodated to the ſubject. Before Moſes, the people of God had nothing in writing. He hath left nothing to poſterity but what he had verbally collected from his anceſtors, that is to ſay, the whole tradition of mankind; and the firſt, he hath compriſed in one volume, the hiſtory of God's wonders and of his manifeſtations to men, the remembrance of which had till then compoſed

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the whole religion, the whole knowledge, and the whole conſolation of the family of Abraham. The candour and ſincerity of this author appear in the ſimplicity of his hiſtory. He takes no precaution to ſecure belief, becauſe he ſuppoſes that thoſe for whom he writes require none to believe: and all the facts which he relates being well known among them, it is more for the purpoſe of preſerving them to their poſterity, than for any inſtruction in them for themſelves.

Behold, my brethren, which way the Chriſtian religion begins to acquire influence over the minds of men. Turn on all ſides, read the hiſtory of every people and of every nation, and you will find nothing ſo well eſtabliſhed upon the earth: What do I ſay? You will find nothing more worthy the attention of a rational mind. If men be born for a religion, they are born for this one alone. If there be a Supreme Being who hath manifeſted the truth to men, this alone is worthy of men and of him. Every where elſe the origin is fabulous; here it is equally certain as all the reſt; and the latter ages, which cannot be diſputed, are, however, only the proofs of the certitude of the firſt. Therefore, if there be an authority upon the earth to which reaſon ought to yield, it is to that of the Chriſtian religion.

To the character of its antiquity muſt be added that of its perpetuity. Figure to yourſelves here that endleſs variety of ſects and of religions which have ſucceſſively reigned upon the earth: Follow the hiſtory of the ſuperſtitions of every people and of every country; they have flouriſhed a few years, and afterwards ſunk into oblivion along with the power of their followers. Where are the gods of Emath, of Arphad, and of Sepharvaim? Recollect the hiſtory of thoſe firſt conquerors: In conquering the people, they

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conquered the gods of the people; and, in overturning their power, they overturned their worſhip. How beautiful, my brethren, to ſee the religion of our fathers alone maintaining itſelf from the firſt, ſurviving all ſects; and, notwithſtanding the divers fortunes of thoſe who have poſſeſſed it, alone paſſing from father to ſon, and braving every exertion to efface it from the heart of men! It is not the arm of fleſh which hath preſerved it. Ah! The people of God hath, almoſt always, been weak, oppreſſed, and perſecuted. No; it is not, ſays the prophet, by their own ſword that our fathers got the land in poſſeſſion; but thy right hand, O Lord, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, becauſe thou hadſt a favour unto them. One while ſlaves, another fugitives, and another tributaries of various nations; they a thouſand times ſaw Chaldea, Aſſyria, Babylon, the moſt formidable powers of the earth, the whole univerſe conſpire their ruin, and the total extinction of their worſhip; but this people, ſo weak, oppreſſed in Egypt, wandering in the deſert, and afterwards carried in captivity into a foreign land, no power hath ever been able to exterminate, while ſo many others more powerful, have followed the deſtiny of human things; and its worſhip hath always ſubſiſted with itſelf, in ſpite of all the efforts made by almoſt every age to deſtroy it.

Now, whence comes it, that a worſhip ſo contradicted, ſo arduous in its obſervances, ſo rigorous in its puniſhments upon tranſgreſſors, and even ſo liable to be eſtabliſhed or to be overthrown, through the mere inconſtancy and ignorance of the people who was its firſt depoſitary; whence comes it that it alone hath been perpetuated amid ſo many revolutions, while the ſuperſtition ſupported by all the power of empires and of kingdoms, have ſunk into their original oblivion? Ah! is it not God, and not man, who

hath done all theſe things? Is it not the arm of the Almighty which hath preſerved his work? And ſince every thing invented by the human mind has periſhed, is it not to be inferred, that what hath always endured was alone the work of the divine wiſdom?

Laſtly, If to its antiquity and to its perpetuity, you add its uniformity, no pretext for reſiſtance will be left to reaſon. For, my brethren, every thing changes upon the earth, becauſe every thing follows the mutability of its origin. Occaſions, the differences of ages, the diverſe humours of climates, and the neceſſity of the times, have introduced a thouſand changes in all the human laws. Faith alone hath never changed. Such as our fathers received it, ſuch have we it at preſent, and ſuch ſhall our deſcendants one day receive it. It hath been unfolded through the courſe of ages, and likewiſe, I confeſs, through the neceſſity of ſecuring it from the errors which have been attempted to be introduced into it; but every thing which once appeared to belong to it, hath always appeared as appertaining to it. There is little wonder in the duration of a religion, when accommodations are made to times and to conjectures, and when they may add or diminiſh according to the fancy of the ages, and of thoſe who govern; but never to relax, in ſpite of the change of manners and of times; to ſee every thing change around, and yet be always the ſame, is the grand privilege of the Chriſtian religion. And by theſe three characters, of antiquity, of perpetuity, and of uniformity, which excluſively belong to it, its authority is the only one on the earth capable of determining a wiſe mind.

But if the ſubmiſſion of the believer be reaſonable on the part of the authority which exacts it, it is not leſs ſo on the

the part of the things which are propoſed to his belief. And here, my brethren, let us enter into the foundation of the Chriſtian worſhip. It is not afraid of inveſtigation, like thoſe abominable myſteries of idolatry, the infamy and horror of which were concealed by the darkeſt obſcurity. A religion, ſays Tertullian, which would ſhun examination, and would dread being ſearched into, ſhould ever be ſuſpected. The more the Chriſtian worſhip is inveſtigated, the more are beauties and hidden wonders found in it. Idolatry inſpired man with fooliſh ſentiments of the Divinity: philoſophy, with very unreaſonable ones of himſelf: cupidity, with iniquitous ones towards the reſt of men. Now, admire the wiſdom of religion, which remedies all theſe three evils, which the reaſon of all ages had never been able either to eradicate or even to find out.

And, *1ſtly*, what other legiſlator hath ſpoken of the divinity, like that of the Chriſtians? Find elſewhere if you can, more ſublime ideas of his power, of his immenſity, of his wiſdom, of his grandeur, and of his juſtice, than thoſe which are given us in our ſcriptures. If there be over us a ſupreme and eternal being, in whom all things live, he muſt be ſuch as the Chriſtian religion repreſents him. We alone compare him not to the likeneſs of man. We alone worſhip him ſeated above the cherubims, filling every where with his preſence, regulating all by his wiſdom, creating light and darkneſs, author of good, and puniſher of vice. We alone honour him as he wiſhes to be honoured; that is to ſay, we make not the worſhip due to him, to conſiſt in the multitude of victims, nor in the external pomp of our homages; but in adoration, in love, in praiſe, and in thankſgiving. We refer to him the good which is in us, as to its principle; and we always attribute vice to ourſelves, which takes its riſe only in our corruption.

tion. We hope to find in him the reward of a fidelity, which is the gift of his grace, and the punishment of transgressions, which are always the consequence of the bad use wich we make of our liberty. Now, what can be more worthy of the supreme Being than all these ideas!

2dly. A vain philosophy either had degraded man to the level of the beast, by centering his felicity in the senses; or had foolishly exalted him even to the likeness of God, by persuading him that he might find his own happiness in his own wisdom. Now, the Christian morality avoids these two extremes: it withdraws man from carnal pleasures, by discovering to him the excellency of his nature, and the holiness of his destination; it corrects his pride, by making him sensible of his own wretchedness and meanness.

3dly. Cupidity rendered man unjust towards the rest of men. Now, what other doctrine than that of Christians, both ever so well regulated our duties on this head. It instructs us to yield obedience to the powers established by God, not only through fear of their authority, but through an obligation of conscience; to respect our superiors, to bear with our equals, to be affable towards our inferiors, to love all men as ourselves. It alone is capable of forming good citizens, faithful subjects, patient servants, humble masters, incorruptible magistrates, clement princes, and zealous friends. It alone renders the honour of marriage inviolable, secures the peace of families, and maintains the tranquillity of states. It not only checks usurpations, but it prohibits even the desire of others property; it not only requires us, not to view with an envious eye the prosperity of our brother, but it commands us to share our own riches with him, if need require; it not only forbids us to attempt his life, but it requires us to do good, even

even to thoſe who injure us; to bleſs thoſe who curſe us, and to be all only of one heart and of one mind. Give me, ſaid formerly St. Auguſtin to the heathens of his time, a kingdom all compoſed of people of this kind: Good God, what peace! what felicity! What a repreſentation of heaven upon the earth! Have all the ideas of philoſophy ever come near to the plan of this heavenly republic? And is it not true, that if a God hath ſpoken to men, to lay open to them the ways of ſalvation, he could never have held any other language?

To all theſe maxims, ſo worthy of reaſon, it is true, that religion adds myſteries which exceed our comprehenſion. But, beſides that good ſenſe ſhould induce us to yield thereon to a religion ſo venerable through its antiquity, ſo divine in its morality, ſo ſuperior to every thing on the earth in its authority, and alone worthy of being believed, the motives it employs for our perſuaſion are ſufficient to conquer unbelief,

1ſtly, Theſe myſteries were foretold many ages before their accompliſhment, and foretold with every circumſtance of times and places; nor are they vague prophecies, referred to the credulity of the vulgar alone, uttered in a corner of the earth, of the ſame age as the events, and unknown to the reſt of the univerſe. They are prophecies which, from the beginning of the world, have conſtituted the religion of an entire people; which fathers tranſmitted to their children as their moſt precious inheritance; which were preſerved in the holy temple as the moſt ſacred pledge of the divine promiſes; and, laſtly, to the truth of which the nation moſt inveterate againſt Jeſus Chriſt, and their firſt depoſitary, ſtill at preſent bears witneſs in the face of the whole univerſe: prophecies, which were not myſteriouſly

ouſly hidden from the people, leſt their falſehood ſhould be betrayed; like thoſe vain oracles of the Sybils, carefully ſhut up in the capitol, fabricated to ſupport the Roman pride, expoſed to the view of the pontiffs alone, and produced, peace-meal, from time to time, to authoriſe, in the mind of the people, either a dangerous enterpriſe, or an unjuſt war. On the contrary, our prophetical books were the daily ſtudy of a whole people. The young and the old, women and children, prieſts and men of all ranks, princes and ſubjects, were indiſpenſibly obliged to have them continually in their hands; every one was entitled to ſtudy his duties there, and to diſcover his hopes. Far from flattering their pride, they held forth only the ingratitude of their fathers; in every page they announced misfortunes to them as the juſt puniſhment of their crimes; to kings they reproached their diſſipations, to the pontiffs their profuſion, to the people their inconſtancy and unbelief; and, nevertheleſs, theſe holy books were dear to them; and, from the oracles which they ſaw continually accompliſhing in them, they awaited with confidence the fulfilment of thoſe which the whole univerſe hath now witneſſed. Now, the knowledge of what is to come is the leaſt ſuſpicious character of the divinity.

2*dly*, Theſe myſteries are founded upon facts ſo evidently miraculous, ſo well known in Judea, ſo agreed to then, even by thoſe whoſe intereſt it was to reject them, ſo ſignaliſed by events which intereſted the whole nation, ſo often repeated in the cities, in the country, in the temple, and in the public places, that the eyes muſt be ſhut againſt the light to call them in queſtion. The apoſtles have preached them, have written them, even in Judea, a very ſhort time after their fulfilment; that is to ſay, in a time when the pontiffs, who had condemned Jeſus Chriſt, ſtill living,

ing, might ſo eaſily have controverted and proclaimed their impoſture, had they really been a deception upon mankind. Jeſus Chriſt, by fulfilling his promiſe of riſing again confirmed his goſpel, and it is not to be ſuppoſed either, that the apoſtles could be deceived on a fact ſo deciſive and ſo eſſential for them; on that fact ſo often foretold, and looked forward to as the principal point on which all the reſt was to turn; that fact ſo often confirmed, and that before ſo many witneſſes; nor that they themſelves wiſhed to deceive us, and to preach a falſehood to men at the expence of their own eaſe, honour, and life, the only return which they had to expect for their impoſture. Would theſe men, who have left to us only ſuch pious and wiſe precepts, have given to the earth an example of folly hitherto unknown to every people, and without view, intereſt, or motive, have coolly devoted themſelves to the moſt excruciating tortures, and to a death ſuffered with the moſt heroical piety, merely to maintain the truth of a thing, of which they themſelves knew the falſehood? Would theſe men have all tranquilly ſubmitted to death for the ſake of another man who had deceived them, and who, having failed in his promiſe of riſing again from the grave, had only impoſed, during life, upon their credulity and weakneſs: Let the impious man no longer reproach to us, as a credulity, the incomprehenſible myſteries of faith. He muſt be very credulous himſelf, to be able to perſuade himſelf of the poſſibility of ſuppoſitions ſo abſurd.

Laſtly, The whole univerſe hath been docile to the faith of theſe myſteries; the Ceſars, whom it degraded from the rank of gods; the philoſophers, whom it convicted of ignorance and vanity; the voluptuous, to whom it preached ſelf-denial and ſufferance; the rich, whom it obliged to poverty and humility; the poor, whom it commanded

manded to love even their abjection and indigence; all men, of whom it combatted all the paſſions. This faith, preached by twelve poor men without learning, talents, or ſupport, hath ſubjected emperors, the learned equally as the illiterate, cities and empires; myſteries apparently ſo abſurd, have overthrown all the ſects, and all the monuments of a proud reaſon, and the folly of the croſs hath been wiſer than all the wiſdom of the age. The whole univerſe hath conſpired againſt it, and every effort of its enemies, hath only added freſh confirmation to it. To be a believer, and to be deſtined to death, were two things inſeparable; yet the danger was only an additional charm; the more the perſecutions were violent, the more progreſs did faith make; and the blood of the martyrs was the ſeed of believers. O God! who doth not feel thy finger here? Who, in theſe traits, would not acknowledge the character of thy work? Where is the reaſon which doth not feel the vanity of its doubts to ſink into nothing here, and which ſtill bluſhes to ſubmit to a doctrine, to which the whole univerſe hath yielded? But not only is this ſubmiſſion reaſonable, it is likewiſe glorious to men.

PART II. Pride is the ſecret ſource of unbelief. In that oſtentation of reaſon, which induces the unbeliever to contemn the common belief, there is a deplorable ſingularity which flatters him, and occaſions him to ſuppoſe in himſelf more vigour of mind and more light than in the reſt of men, becauſe he boldly ventures to caſt off a yoke to which they have all ſubmitted, and to ſtand up againſt what all the reſt had hitherto been contented to worſhip.

Now, in order to deprive the unbeliever of ſo wretched a conſolation, it is only neceſſary to demonſtrate, in the firſt place, that nothing is more glorious to reaſon than faith;

faith; glorious on the ſide of its promiſes for the future; glorious from the ſituation in which it places the believer for the preſent; laſtly, glorious from the grand models which it holds out to his imitation.

Glorious on the ſide of the promiſes contained in it. What are the promiſes of faith, my brethren? The adoption of God, an immortal ſociety with him, the complete redemption of our bodies, the eternal felicity of our ſouls, freedom from the paſſions, our hearts fixed by the poſſeſſion of true riches, our minds penetrated with the ineffable light of the ſovereign reaſon, and happy in the clear and always durable view of the truth. Such are the promiſes of faith; it informs us that our origin is divine, and our hopes eternal.

Now, I aſk, is it diſgraceful to reaſon to believe truths which do ſuch honour to the immortality of its nature? What, my brethren, would it then be more glorious to man to believe himſelf of the ſame nature as the beaſts, and to look forward to the ſame end? What, the unbeliever would think himſelf more honoured by the conviction that he is only a vile clay, put together by chance, and which chance ſhall diſſolve, without end, deſtination, hope, or any other uſe of his reaſon and of his body, than that of brutally plunging himſelf, like the brutes, into carnal gratifications! What, he would have a higher opinion of himſelf, when viewed in the light of an unfortunate wretch, accidentally placed upon the earth, who looks forward to nothing beyond life, whoſe ſweeteſt hope is that of ſinking back to non-entity, who relates nothing but himſelf, and is reduced to find his felicity in himſelf, though he can there find only anxieties and ſecret terrors! Is this then that miſerable diſtinction by which the pride of unbelief

is ſo much flattered? Great God! How glorious to thy truth, to have no enemies but men of this character! For my part, as St. Ambroſe formerly ſaid to the unbelievers of his time, I glory in believing truths ſo honourable to men, and in expecting the fulfilment of promiſes ſo conſolatory. To refuſe belief to them, is ſorrily to puniſh one's ſelf. Ah! if I be deceived, in preferring the hope of one day enjoying the eternal ſociety of the righteous in the boſom of God to the humbling belief of being of the ſame nature as the beaſts, it is an error dear to me, which I delight in, and upon which I wiſh never to be undeceived.

But, if faith be glorious on the ſide of its promiſes for the future, it is not leſs ſo from the ſituation in which it places the believer for the preſent. And here, my brethren, figure to yourſelves a truly righteous man, who lives by faith, and you will acknowledge that there is nothing on the earth more ſublime. Maſter of his deſires and of all the movements of the heart; exerciſing a glorious empire over himſelf; in patience and in equanimity enjoying his ſoul, and regulating all his paſſions by the bridle of temperance; humble in proſperity, firm under misfortunes, cheerful in tribulations, peaceful with thoſe who hate peace, callous to injuries, feeling for the afflictions of thoſe who treſpaſs againſt him, faithful in his promiſes, religious in his friendſhips, and unſhaken in his duties; little affected with riches, which he contemns; fatigued with honours, which he dreads; greater than the whole world, which he conſiders only as a maſs of earth: what dignity!

Philoſophy conquered one vice only by another. It pompouſly taught contempt of the world, merely to attract the applauſes of the world; it ſought more the glory of wiſdom,

wiſdom, than wiſdom itſelf. In deſtroying the other paſſions, it continually, upon their ruins, raiſed up one much more dangerous; I mean to ſay pride: Like that prince of Babylon who overthrew the altars of the national gods, merely to exalt upon their wrecks his own impious ſtatue, and that monſtrous coloſſus of pride which he wanted the whole earth to worſhip.

But faith exalts the juſt man above even his virtue. Through it he is ſtill greater in the ſecrecy of his heart, and in the eyes of God, than before men. He forgives without pride; he is diſintereſted without ſhew; he ſuffers without wiſhing it to be known; he moderates his paſſion without perceiving it himſelf; he alone is ignorant of the glory and of the merit of his actions; far from graciouſly looking upon himſelf, he is aſhamed of his virtues much more than the ſinner is of his vices; far from courting applauſe, he hides his works from the light, as if they were deeds of darkneſs; love of duty is the ſole ſpring of his virtue, he acts under the eyes of God alone, and as if there were no longer men upon the earth; what dignity! Find, if you can, any thing greater in the univerſe. Review all the various kinds of glory with which the world gratifies the vanity of men; and ſee, if, all together, they can beſtow that degree of dignity to which the godly are raiſed by faith.

Now, my dear hearer, what more honourable to man than this ſituation? Do you conſider him as more glorious, more reſpectable, more grand, when he follows the impulſes of brutal inſtinct; when he is the ſlave of hatred, revenge, voluptuouſneſs, ambition, envy, and all thoſe other monſters which alternately reign in his heart?

For,

For, are you who make a boaſt of unbelief thoroughly acquainted with what is an unbeliever? He is a man without morals, probity, faith or character, who owns no rule but his paſſions, no law but his iniquitous thoughts, no maſter but his deſires, no check but the dread of authority, no God but himſelf; an unnatural child, ſeeing he believes that chance alone hath given him fathers; a faithleſs friend, ſeeing he looks upon men merely as the wretched fruits of a wild and fortuitous concurrence, to whom he is connected only by tranſitory ties; a cruel maſter, ſeeing he is convinced that the ſtrongeſt and the moſt fortunate have always reaſon on their ſide. For, who could henceforth place any dependence upon you? You no longer fear a God; you no longer reſpect men; you look forward to nothing after this life; virtue and vice are merely prejudices of education in your eyes, and the conſequences of popular credulity. Adulteries, revenge, blaſphemies, the blackeſt treacheries, abominations which we dare not even to name, are no longer in your opinion, but human prohibitions, and regulations eſtabliſhed through the policy of legiſlators. According to you, the moſt horrible crimes, or the pureſt virtues, are all equally the ſame, ſince an eternal annihilation ſhall ſoon equaliſe the juſt and the impious, and for ever confound them both in the dreary manſion of the tomb. What a monſter muſt you then be upon the earth? Does this repreſentation of you highly gratify your pride, or can you ſupport even its idea?

Beſides, you pride yourſelf upon irreligion, as ſpringing from your ſuperiority of mind; but trace it to its ſource. What hath led you to free-thinking? Is it not the corruption of your heart? Would you have ever thought of impiety had you been able to allay religion with your pleaſures? You began to heſitate upon a doctrine which incommoded

commoded your paſſions; and you have marked it down as falſe from the moment that you found it irkſome. You have anxiouſly ſought to perſuade yourſelf what you had ſuch an intereſt to believe; that all died with us; that eternal puniſhments were merely the terrors of education; that inclinations born with us could never be crimes; what know I? And all thoſe maxims of free-thinking originating from hell. We are eaſily perſuaded of what we wiſh. Solomon worſhipped the gods of foreign women only to quiet himſelf in his debaucheries. If men had never had paſſions, or if religion had countenanced them, unbelief would never have appeared upon the earth. And a proof that what I ſay is true, is that, in the moments when you are diſguſted with guilt, you imperceptibly turn towards religion; in the moments when your paſſions are more cool, your doubts diminiſh; you render, as if in ſpite of yourſelf, a ſecret homage in the bottom of your heart to the truth of faith; in vain you try to weaken it, you cannot ſucceed in extinguiſhing it; at the firſt ſignal of death, you raiſe your eyes towards heaven, you acknowledge the God whoſe finger is upon you, you caſt yourſelf upon the boſom of your Father, and the Author of your being; you tremble over a futurity which you had vaunted not to believe; and, humbled under the hand of the Almighty, on the point of falling upon and cruſhing you like a worm of the earth, you confeſs that he is alone great, alone wiſe, alone immtoral, and that man is only vanity and lies.

Laſtly, If freſh proofs were neceſſary to my ſubject, I could prove to you how glorious faith is to man on the ſide of the grand models which it holds out for our imitation. Conſider Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, ſaid formerly the Jews to their children. Conſider the holy men who have gone before you, to whom their faith hath merited ſo honourable

nourable a teſtimony, ſaid formerly St. Paul to the faithful, after having related to them, in that beautiful chapter of his epiſtle to the Hebrews, their names, and the moſt wonderful circumſtances of their hiſtory, from age to age.

Behold the excellency of the Chriſtian faith. Recollect all the great men which, in all ages, have ſubmitted to it; ſuch magnanimous princes, ſuch religious conquerors, ſuch venerable paſtors, ſuch enlightened philoſophers, ſuch eſtimable learned men, wits ſo vaunted in their age, ſuch noble martyrs, ſuch penitent anchorites, ſuch pure and conſtant virgins, heroes in every deſcription of virtue. Philoſophy preached a pompous wiſdom; but its ſage was no where to be found. Here what a cloud of witneſſes! What an uninterrupted tradition of Chriſtian heroes from the blood of Abel down to us!

Now, I aſk, ſhall you bluſh to tread in the ſteps of ſo many illuſtrious names? Place on the one ſide all the great men whom, in all ages, religion hath given to the world, and on the other, that ſmall number of black and deſperate minds whom unbelief hath produced. Doth it appear more honourable for you to rank yourſelf among the latter party? To adopt for guides, and for your models, thoſe men whoſe names are only recollected with horror, thoſe monſters whom it hath pleaſed providence to permit, that nature ſhould, from time to time, bring forth; or the Abrahams, the Joſephs, the Moſeſes, the Davids, the apoſtolic men, the righteous of ancient and of modern times? Support, if you can, this compariſon. Ah! ſaid formerly St. Jerome on a different occaſion, if you believe me in error, it is glorious for me to be deceived with ſuch guides.

And

And here, my brethren, leaving unbelievers for a moment, allow me to addreſs myſelf to you. Avowed unbelief is a vice perhaps rare among us; but the ſimplicity of faith is not perhaps leſs ſo. We would feel a horror at quitting the belief of our fathers; but we wiſh to refine upon our ſincerity. We do not permit ourſelves to doubt upon the main part of the myſteries; but obedience is philoſophically given, by impoſing our own yoke, by weighing the holy truths, receiving ſome as reaſonable, reaſoning upon others, and meaſuring them by our own feeble lights; and our age, more than any other, is full of theſe half believers, who, under the pretext of taking away from religion all that credulity or prejudice may have added to it, deprive faith of the whole merit of ſubmiſſion.

Now, my brethren, ſanctity ought only to be ſpoken of with a religious circumſpection. Faith is a virtue almoſt equally delicate as modeſty: a ſingle doubt, a ſingle word injures it; a breath, as I may ſay, tarniſhes it. Yet, nevertheleſs, what licence do they not allow themſelves in modern converſations upon all that is moſt reſpectable in the faith of our fathers? Alas! the terrible name of the Lord could not be even pronounced under the law by the mouth of man; and, at preſent, all that is moſt ſacred and moſt auguſt in religion, is become a common ſubject of worldly converſations; there every thing is talked over, and freely decided upon. Vain and ſuperficial men, whoſe only knowledge of religion conſiſts of a little more temerity than the illiterate and the common people; producing, as their whole ſtock of learning, ſome common-place and hackneyed doubts, which they have picked up, but never had formed themſelves; doubts which have ſo often been cleared up, that they ſeem now to exiſt no longer but to glorify the truth; men who, amid the moſt diſſolute manners,

ners, have never devoted an hour of ſerious attention to the truth of religion, act the philoſopher, and boldly decide upon points which a whole life of ſtudy, accompanied with learning and piety, could ſcarcely clear up.

Even perſons of a ſex, in whom ignorance on certain points would be meritorious, and who, though knowing, good-breeding and decency require that they ſhould affect to be ignorant; perſons who are better acquainted with the world than with Jeſus Chriſt; who even know not of religion what is neceſſary to regulate their manners, pretend doubts, wiſh to have them explained, are afraid of believing too much, have ſuſpicions upon the whole, yet have none upon their own miſerable ſituation, and the viſible impropriety of their life. O God! it is thus that thou deliverest up ſinners to the vanity of their own fancies, and permitteſt that thoſe who pretend to penetrate into thine adorable ſecrecies know not themſelves. Faith is therefore glorious to man; this has juſt been ſhewn to you: it now remains for me to prove that it is neceſſary to him.

PART III. Of all the characters of faith, the neceſſity of it is the one which renders the unbeliever moſt inexcuſable. All the other motives which are employed to lead him to the truth are foreign, as I may ſay, to him; this one is drawn from his own ground-work, I mean to ſay, from the nature itſelf of his reaſon.

Now, I ſay that faith is abſolutely neceſſary to man, in the gloomy and obſcure paths of this life; for his reaſon is weak, and it requires to be aſſiſted; becauſe it is corrupted, and it requires to be cured; becauſe it is changeable, and it requires to be fixed. Now, faith alone is the aid which

which aſſiſts and enlightens it, the remedy which cures it, the bridle and the rule which retains and fixes it. Yet a moment of attention; I ſhall not miſemploy it.

I ſay, *1ſtly*, that reaſon is weak, and that an aid is neceſſary to it. Alas! my brethren, we know not, neither ourſelves, nor what is external to us. We are totally ignorant how we have been formed, by what imperceptible progreſſions our bodies have received arrangement and life, and what are the infinite ſprings, and the divine ſkill, which give motion to the whole machine. "I cannot tell," ſaid that illuſtrious mother, mentioned in the Maccabees, to her children, "how ye came into my womb; for I neither "gave you breath nor life, neither was it I that formed "the members of every one of you: but doubtleſs the "Creator of the world, who formed the generation of "man, and found out the beginning of all things, will alſo, "of his own mercy, give you breath and life again, as ye "now regard not your own ſelves for his law's ſake." Our body is itſelf a myſtery, in which the human mind is loſt and overwhelmed, and of which the ſecrets ſhall never be fathomed, for there is none but him alone who hath preſided at its formation, who is capable of comprehending them.

That breath of the divinity which animates us, that portion of ourſelves which renders us capable of loving and of knowing, is not leſs unknown to us: we are entirely ignorant how its deſires, its fears, its hopes, are formed, and how it can give to itſelf its ideas and images. No one hath hitherto been able to comprehend how that ſpiritual being, ſo different in its nature from matter, hath poſſibly been united in us with it by ſuch indiſſoluble ties, that the two ſubſtances no longer form but one whole, and the

good and evil of the one become the good and evil of the other. We are a myſtery therefore to ourſelves, as St. Auguſtin formerly ſaid; and we would be difficulted to ſay, what is even that vain curioſity which pries into every thing, or how it hath been formed in our ſoul.

In all around us we ſtill find nothing but enigmas; we live as ſtrangers upon the earth, and amid objects which we know not. To man, nature is a cloſed book; and the Creator, to confound, it would appear, human pride, hath been pleaſed to overſpread the face of this abyſs with an impenetrable obſcurity.

Lift up thine eyes, O man! Conſider thoſe grand luminaries ſuſpended over your head, and which ſwim, as I may ſay, through thoſe immenſe ſpaces in which thy reaſon is loſt. Who, ſays Job, hath formed the ſun, and given a name to the infinite multitude of ſtars? Comprehend, if thou can, their nature, their uſe, their properties, their ſituation, their diſtance, their revolutions, the equality or the inequality of their movements. Our age hath penetrated a little into their obſcurity, that is to ſay, it hath a little better conjectured upon them than the preceding ages; but what are its diſcoveries, when compared to what we are ſtill ignorant of?

Deſcend upon the earth, and tell us, if thou know, what it is that keeps the winds bound up; what regulates the courſe of the thunders and of the tempeſts; what is the fatal boundary which places its mark, and ſays to the ruſhing waves, "Here you ſhall go, and no farther;" and how the prodigy ſo regular of its movements is formed; explain to us the ſurpriſing effects of plants, of metals, of the elements; find out in what manner gold is purified in

the

the bowels of the earth; unravel, if thou can, the infinite skill employed in the formation of the very insects which crawl before us; give us an explanation of the various instincts of animals; turn on every side; nature in all her parts offers nothing to thee but enigmas. O man! thou knowest nothing of the objects, even under thine eyes, and thou wouldst pretend to fathom the eternal depths of faith? Nature is a mystery to thee, and thou wouldst have a religion which had none? Thou art ignorant of the secrets of man, and thou wouldst pretend to know the secrets of God? Thou knowest not thyself, and thou wouldst pretend to fathom what is so much above thee? The universe, which God hath yielded up to thy curiosity and disputes, is an abyss in which thou art lost; and thou [redacted] that the mysteries of faith, which he hath solely [redacted] thy docility and to thy respect, should have nothing which surpasses thy feeble lights? O blindness! were every thing, excepting religion, clear and evident, thou then, with some shew of reason, mightst mistrust its obscurities; but since every thing around thee is a labyrinth in which thou art bewildered, ought not the secret of God, as St. Austin formerly said, to render thee more respectful and more attentive, far from being more incredulous?

The necessity of faith is, therefore, founded, in the first place, upon the weakness of reason; but it is likewise founded upon its profound depravity. And, in effect, what was more natural to man, than to confess his God the author of his being and of his felicity, his end and his principle; than to adore his wisdom, his power, his goodness, and all those divine perfections of which he hath engraven upon his work such profound and evident marks? These lights were born with us. Nevertheless, review all those ages of darkness and of superstition which preceded the gospel,

goſpel, and ſee how far man had degraded his Creator, and to what he had likened his God. There was nothing ſo vile in the created world but his impiety erected into gods, and man was the nobleſt divinity which was worſhipped by man.

If, from religion you paſs to the morality, all the principles of natural equity were effaced, and man no longer bore, written in his heart, the work of that law which nature has engraven on it. Plato, even that man ſo wiſe, and who, according to St. Auguſtin, had ſo nearly approached to the truth, nevertheleſs aboliſhes the holy inſtitution of marriage; and, permitting a brutal confuſion among men, he for ever does away all paternal names and rights, which, even in animals, nature hath ſo evidently reſpected; and gives to the earth men all uncertain of their origin, all coming into the world without parents, as I may ſay; and conſequently without ties, tenderneſs, affection, or humanity; all in a ſituation to become inceſtuous or parricides, without even knowing it.

Others came to announce to men that voluptuouſneſs was the ſovereign good; and whatever might have been the intention of the firſt author of this ſect, it is certain that his diſciples ſought no other felicity than that of the brutes: the moſt ſhameful debaucheries became philoſophical maxims. Rome, Athens, Corinth beheld exceſſes, where it may be ſaid, that man was no longer man. Even this is nothing; the moſt abominable vices were conſecrated there: temples and altars were erected to them: laſciviouſneſs, inceſt, cruelty, treachery, and other ſtill more abandoned crimes, were made divinities of: the worſhip became a public debauch and proſtitution; and gods, ſo criminal, were no longer honoured but by crimes: and the apoſtle, who

who relates them to us, takes care to inform us that ſuch was not merely the licentiouſneſs of the people, but of ſages and philoſophers who had erred in the vanity of their own thoughts, and whom God had delivered up to the corruption of their heart. O God! in permitting human reaſon to fall into ſuch horrible errors, thou intended to let man know, that reaſon, when delivered up to its own darkneſs, is capable of every thing, and that it can never take upon itſelf to be its own guide, without plunging into abyſſes from which thy law and thy light are alone capable of withdrawing him.

Laſtly, If the depravity of reaſon ſo evidently expoſe the neceſſity of a remedy to cure, its eternal inconſtancies and fluctuations yet more inſtruct man, that a check and a rule are abſolutely requiſite to fix it.

And here, my brethren, if the brevity of a diſcourſe would permit all to be ſaid, what vain diſputes, what endleſs queſtions, what different opinions have formerly engroſſed all the ſchools of heathen philoſophy! And think not that it was upon matters which God ſeems to have yielded up to the conteſtation of men; it was upon the nature even of God, upon his exiſtence, upon the immortality of the ſoul, upon the true felicity.

Some doubted the whole; others believed that they knew every thing. Some denied a God; others gave us one of their own faſhioning; that is to ſay, ſome of them ſlothful, an indolent ſpectator of human things, and tranquilly leaving to chance the management of his own work, as a care unworthy of his greatneſs, and incompatible with his conveniency; ſome others made him the ſlave of fates, and ſubject to laws which he had no hand in impoſing

ing upon himſelf: others again incorporated, with the whole univerſe, the ſoul of that vaſt body, and compoſing, as it were, a part of that world which is entirely his work. Many others of which I know nothing, for I pretend not to recapitulate them all; but as many ſchools, ſo many were the ſentiments upon ſo eſſential a point. So many ages, ſo many freſh abſurdities upon the immortality and the nature of the ſoul; here, it was an aſſemblage of atoms; there, a ſubtile fire; in another place, a minute and penetrating air; in another ſchool, a portion of the divinity. Some made it to die with the body; others would have it to have exiſted before the body: ſome again made it to paſs from one body to another; from man to the horſe, from the condition of a reaſonable being to that of animals without reaſon. There were ſome who taught that the true happineſs of man is in the ſenſes; a greater number placed it in the reaſon; others again found it only in fame and glory; many in ſloth and indolence. And what is the moſt deplorable here, is, that the exiſtence of God, his nature, the immortality of the ſoul, the deſtination and the happineſs of men, all points ſo eſſential to his deſtiny, ſo deciſive with regard to his eternal miſery or happineſs, were nevertheleſs become problems, every where deſtined merely to amuſe the leiſure of the ſchools and the vanity of the Sophiſts; idle queſtions, in which they were never intereſted for the principle of truth, but ſolely for the glory of coming off conqueror. Great God! It is in this manner that thou ſporteſt with human wiſdom.

If from thence we entered into the Chriſtian ages, who could enumerate that endleſs variety of ſects which, in all times, hath broken the unity, in order to follow ſtrange doctrines? What were the abominations of the Gnoſticks, the extravagant ſollies of the Valentinians, the fanaticiſm of

of Montanus, the contradictions of the Manicheans? Follow every age; as, in order to prove the juſt, it is neceſſary that there be hereſies. You will find that in every age the church hath always been miſerably rent with them.

Recal to your remembrance the ſad diſſentions of only the paſt age. Since the ſeparation of our brethren, what a monſtrous variety in their doctrine! What endleſs ſects ſprung from only one ſect! What numberleſs particular aſſemblies in one ſame ſchiſm! O faith! O gift of God! O divine torch, which comes to clear up darkneſs, how neceſſary art thou to man! O infallible rule, ſent from heaven, and given in truſt to the church of Jeſus Chriſt, always the ſame in all ages, always independent of places, of times, of nations, and of intereſts, how requiſite it is that thou ſerved as a check upon the eternal fluctuations of the human mind! O pillar of fire, at the ſame time ſo obſcure and ſo luminous, of what importance it is that thou always conducted the camp of the Lord, the tabernacle and the tents of Iſrael, through all the perils of the deſert, the rocks, the temptations and the dark and unknown paths of this life!

For you, my brethren, what inſtruction ſhould we draw from this diſcourſe, and what ſhould I ſay to you in concluding? You ſay that you have faith; ſhew your faith by your works. What ſhall it avail you to have believed, if your manners have belied your belief? The goſpel is yet more the religion of the heart than of the mind. That faith which makes Chriſtians is not a ſimple ſubmiſſion of the reaſon; it is a pious tenderneſs of the ſoul; it is a continual longing to become like unto Jeſus Chriſt; it is an indefatigable application in rooting out from ourſelves whatever may be inimical to a life of faith. There is an

unbelief

unbelief of the heart, equally dangerous to ſalvation as that of the mind. A man who obſtinately refuſes belief, after all the proofs of religion, is a monſter, whom we contemplate with horror; but a Chriſtian who believes, yet lives as though he believed not, is a madman, whoſe folly compaſſeth comprehenſion: the one procures his own condemnation, like a man deſperate; the other, like an indolent one, who tranquilly allows himſelf to be carried down by the waves, and thinks that he is thereby ſaving himſelf. Make your faith then certain, my brethren, by your good works; and if you ſhudder at the ſole name of an impious perſon, have the ſame horror at yourſelves, ſeeing we are taught by faith, that the deſtiny of the wicked Chriſtian ſhall not be different from his, and that his lot ſhall be the ſame as that of the unbeliever. Live conformably to what you believe. Such is the faith of the righteous, and the only one to which the eternal promiſes have been made.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

DOUBTS UPON RELIGION.

JOHN. vii. 27.

Howbeit we know this man, whence he is; but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

SUCH is the grand pretext oppoſed by the unbelief of the Jews to the doctrine and to the miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt; doubts upon the truth of his miſſion. We know who thou art, and whence thou comeſt, ſaid they to him; but the Chriſt whom we expect, when he cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. It is far from clear, then, that thou art the Meſſiah promiſed to our fathers; perhaps it is an evil ſpirit which, through thee, operates theſe wonders before our eyes, and impoſes upon the credulity of the vulgar; ſo many deceivers have already appeared in Judea, who, giving themſelves out for the Great Prophet who is to come, have ſeduced the people, and at laſt drawn down upon themſelves the puniſhment due to their impoſture. Keep us no longer in doubt: if thou be the Chriſt, tell us plainly, and in ſuch a way as that room ſhall no longer be left either for doubt or for miſtake.

I would not dare to ſay this here, my brethren, were the language of doubts upon faith not become ſo common

now among us, that precaution is needleſs in undertaking to confute it: behold the almoſt univerſal pretext employed in the world to authoriſe a life altogether criminal. We every where meet with ſinners who coolly tell us, that they would be converted were they well aſſured that all we tell them of religion were true; that perhaps there is nothing after this life; that they have doubts and difficulties upon our myſteries, to which they can find no ſatisfactory anſwer; that, after all, the whole appears very uncertain; and that, before engaging to follow all the rigid maxims of the goſpel, it would be proper to be well aſſured that our toils ſhall not be loſt.

Now, my intention at preſent is not to overthrow unbelief by the grand proofs which eſtabliſh the truth of the Chriſtian faith: ſetting aſide that elſewhere we have already eſtabliſhed them, it is a ſubject far too extenſive for a diſcourſe, and often beyond even the capacity of the majority of thoſe who liſten to us; it is frequently paying too much deference to the frivolous objections of thoſe who give themſelves out as free-thinkers in the world to employ the gravity of our miniſtry in refuting and overthrowing them.

We muſt take a ſhorter and more eaſy way, therefore, at preſent. My deſign is not to enter into the foundation of the proofs which render teſtimony to the truth of faith; I mean only to expoſe the falſity of unbelief: I mean to prove that the greateſt part of thoſe who call themſelves unbelievers, are not ſo; that almoſt all thoſe ſinners who vaunt, and are continually alledging to us their doubts, as the only obſtacle to their converſion, have actually none; and that, of all the pretexts employed as an excuſe for not changing their life, that of doubts upon religion,

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now the moſt common, is the leaſt true and the leaſt ſincere.

It appears ſurpriſing at firſt that I ſhould undertake to prove to thoſe who believe to have doubts upon religion, and are continually objecting them to us, that they have actually none: nevertheleſs, with a proper knowledge of men, and, above all, with a proper attention to the character of thoſe who make a boaſt of doubting, nothing is more eaſy than this conviction. I ſay to their character, in which are always to be found licentiouſneſs, ignorance, and vanity; and ſuch are the three uſual ſources of their doubts: they give the credit of them to unbelief, which has ſcarcely a ſhare in them.

1ſtly, It is licentiouſneſs which propoſes, without daring to believe them. Firſt reflection.

2dly, It is ignorance which adopts, without comprehending them. Second reflection.

Laſtly, It is vanity which boaſts, without being able to ſucceed in drawing any reſource from them. Laſt reflection.

That is to ſay, that the greateſt part of thoſe who call themſelves unbelievers, are licentious enough to wiſh to be ſo; too ignorant to be ſo in reality; and, nevertheleſs, ſufficiently vain to wiſh to appear ſo. Let us unfold theſe three reflections, now become ſo important among us; and let us overthrow licentiouſneſs rather than unbelief, by laying it open to itſelf.

PART

PART I. It muſt at once be admitted, my brethren, and it is melancholly for us that we owe this confeſſion to the truth: it muſt be admitted, I ſay, that our age and thoſe of our fathers have ſeen real unbelievers. In that depravity of manners in which we live, and amid all the ſcandals which have ſo long afflicted the church, it is not ſurpriſing that men have ſometimes been found who have denied the exiſtence of a God; and that faith ſo weakened in all, ſhould, in ſome, be at laſt wholly extinguiſhed. As choſen and extraordinary ſouls appear in every age, whom the Lord filleth with his grace, his lights, and his moſt ſhining gifts, and upon whom he delighteth in liberally pouring forth all the riches of his mercy; ſo, likewiſe, are ſeen others in whom iniquity is, as I may ſay, conſummate; and whom the Lord ſeems to have marked out, to diſplay in them the moſt terrible judgments of his juſtice, and the moſt fatal effects of his neglect and wrath.

The church, where all theſe ſcandals are to increaſe even to the end, cannot, therefore, boaſt of being entirely purged from the ſcandal of unbelief: ſhe hath, from time to time, her ſtars which enlighten, and her monſters who diſfigure her; and, along with thoſe great men, celebrated for their lights and for their ſanctity, who in every age have ſerved as her ſupport and ornament, ſhe hath alſo witneſſed a liſt of impious men, whoſe names are ſtill at preſent the horror of the univerſe, who have dared, in writings full of blaſphemy and impiety, to attack the myſteries of God, to deny ſalvation and the promiſes made to our fathers, to overturn the foundation of faith, and to preach free-thinking among believers.

I do not pretend, therefore, to ſay, that, among ſo many wretches who ſpeak the language of unbelief among us, there

there may not perhaps be found ſome one ſufficiently corrupted in mind and in heart, and ſo far abandoned by God, as actually and in effect to be an unbeliever: I mean only to eſtabliſh, that theſe men grounded in impiety are rare; and that, among all thoſe who are continually vaunting their doubts and their unbelief, and make a deplorable oſtentation of them, there is not perhaps a ſingle one upon whoſe heart faith doth not ſtill preſerve its rights, and who doth not inwardly dread that God whom he apparently refuſes to acknowledge. To overthrow, it is not always neceſſary to combat our pretended unbelievers; it would often be combating only phantoms: they require only to be diſplayed ſuch as they are: the wretched decoration of unbelief quickly tumbles down, and nothing remains but their paſſions and their debaucheries.

And behold the firſt reaſon upon which I have eſtabliſhed the general propoſition, that the majority of thoſe who make a boaſt of their doubts, have actually none; it is, that their doubts are thoſe of licentiouſneſs, and not of unbelief. Why, my brethren? Becauſe it is licentiouſneſs which hath formed their doubts, and not their doubts licentiouſneſs; becauſe that, in fact, it is to their paſſions and not to their doubts that they hold; laſtly, becauſe that, in general, they attack in religion only thoſe truths inimical to their paſſions. Behold reflections which in my opinion are worthy of your attention; I ſhall lay them before you without ornament, and in the ſame order in which they preſented themſelves to my mind.

I ſay, in the firſt place; becauſe their doubts have ſprung from licentiouſneſs, and not licentiouſneſs from their doubts. Yes, my brethren, not one of all thoſe who affect to profeſs themſelves unbelievers has ever been

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ſeen to begin by doubts upon the truths of faith, and afterwards from doubts to fall into licentiouſneſs; they begin with the paſſions; doubts come afterwards: they firſt give way to the irregularities of the age, and to the exceſſes of debauchery; and when attained to a certain length, and they find it no longer poſſible to return upon their ſteps, they then ſay, in order to quiet themſelves, that there is nothing after this life, or, at leaſt, they are well pleaſed to find people who ſay ſo. It is not, therefore, the little certainty they find in religion which authoriſes their concluſion that we ought to yield ourſelves up to pleaſure, and that ſelf-denial is needleſs, ſince every thing dies with us: it is the yielding of themſelves up to pleaſure which creates doubts upon religion, and, by rendering ſelf-denial next to impoſſible, leads them to conclude that, conſequently, it is needleſs. Faith becomes ſuſpected only when it begins to be troubleſome; and, to this day, unbelief hath never made a voluptuary; but voluptuouſneſs hath made almoſt all the unbelievers.

And a proof of what I ſay, you whom this diſcourſe regards, is that, while you have lived with modeſty and innocence, you never doubted. Recollect thoſe happy times when the paſſions had not yet corrupted your heart; the faith of your fathers had then nothing but what was auguſt and reſpectable; reaſon bent without pain to the yoke of authority; you never thought of doubts or difficulties: from the moment your manners changed, your views upon religion have no longer been the ſame. It is not faith, therefore, which hath found new difficulties in your reaſon; it is the practice of duties which hath encountered new obſtacles in your heart. And ſhould you tell us, that your firſt impreſſions, ſo favourable to faith, ſprung ſolely from the prejudices of education and of childhood, we

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ſhall anſwer, that the ſecond, ſo favourable to impiety, have ſprung ſolely from the prejudices of the paſſions and of debauchery; and that prejudices for prejudices, it appears to us, that it is ſtill better to keep by thoſe which are formed in innocence and lead us to virtue, than to thoſe which are born in the infamy of the paſſions, and preach up only free-thinking and guilt.

Thus nothing is more humiliating for unbelief than recalling it to its origin: it bears a falſe name of learning and of light: and it is a child of iniquity and of darkneſs. It is not the ſtrength of reaſon which has led our pretended unbelievers to ſkepticiſm; it is the weakneſs of a corrupted heart which has been unable to ſurmount its infamous paſſions; it is even a mean cowardlineſs which, unable to ſupport and to view with a ſteady eye the terrors and the threatenings of religion, endeavours to ſhake off their thoughts by continually repeating that they are childiſh terrors; it is a man who, afraid of the night, ſings as he goes along to prevent himſelf from thinking: debauchery always makes us cowardly and fearful; and it is nothing but an exceſs of fear of eternal puniſhments which occaſions a ſinner to be continually preaching up and ſinging to us that they are doubtful; he trembles, and wiſhes to ſtrengthen himſelf againſt himſelf; he cannot ſupport, at the ſame time, the view of his crimes, and that of the puniſhment which awaits them; that faith ſo venerable, and of which he ſpeaks with ſuch contempt, nevertheleſs terrifies and diſquiets him ſtill more than thoſe other ſinners who, without doubting its puniſhments, yet are frequently not leſs unfaithful to its precepts; it is a coward who hides his fear under a falſe oſtentation of bravery. No, my brethren, our pretended free-thinkers give themſelves out as men of

courage

courage and firmneſs; examine them narrowly, and they are the weakeſt and moſt cowardly of men.

Beſides, it is not ſurpriſing that licentiouſneſs lead us to doubt of religion: the paſſions require the aid of unbelief; for they are too feeble and too unreaſonable to maintain their own cau[illegible] Our lights, our feelings, our conſcience, all ſtruggle [illegible]n us againſt them: we are under the neceſſity, therefore, of ſeeking a ſupport for them, and of defending them againſt ourſelves: for, it is a matter of ſatisfaction, to juſtify to one's ſelf whatever is pleaſing. We would neither wiſh that paſſions which are dear to us ſhould be criminal, nor that we ſhould continually have to ſupport the intereſts of our pleaſures againſt thoſe of our conſcience: we wiſh tranquilly to enjoy our crimes, and to free ourſelves from that troubleſome monitor which continually eſpouſes the cauſe of virtue againſt ourſelves: while remorſes conteſt the pleaſure of our enjoyments, they muſt be very imperfectly taſted: it is paying too great a price for guilt, to purchaſe it at the expence of that quiet which is ſought in it: we muſt either terminate our debaucheries, or try to quiet ourſelves in them; and as it is impoſſible to enjoy peace of mind in them, and next to impoſſible to terminate them, the only refuge ſeems that of doubting the truths which diſquiet us; and in order to attain to tranquillity, every effort is uſed to inculcate the perſuaſion of unbelief.

That is to ſay, that the great effort of licentiouſneſs is that of leading us to the deſire of unbelief: the horrible ſecurity of the unbeliever is coveted; total darkneſs of heart is conſidered as a happy ſtate; it is unpleaſant to have been born with a weaker and more fearful conſcience; the lot

lot of thoſe, apparently firm and unſhaken in impiety, is envied; while they, in their turn, perhaps a prey to the moſt gloomy remorſes, and vaunting a courage they are far from having, view our lot with envy; for, judging of us from the language we hold upon free-thinking, they take us for what we take them, that is to ſay, for what we are not, and for what both they and we would wiſh to be. And it is thus, O my God! that theſe falſe heroes of impiety live in a perpetual illuſion, continually deceive themſelves, and appear what they are not, only becauſe they would wiſh to be it: they would willingly have religion to be but a dream; they ſay in their heart "There is "no God;" that is to ſay, this impious language is the deſire of their heart: they would ardently wiſh no God; that that Being ſo grand and ſo neceſſary, were a chimera; that they were the ſole maſters of their own deſtiny; that they were accountable only to themſelves for the horrors of their life and the infamy of their paſſions; that all finiſhed with them; and that, beyond the grave, there were no ſupreme and eternal Judge, the puniſher of vice and the rewarder of virtue: they wiſh it; they deſtroy as much as they can through the impious wiſhes of their heart, but they cannot efface, from the foundation of their being, the idea of his power and the dread of his puniſhments.

In effect, it would be too vulgar for a man, vain and plunged in debauchery, inwardly to ſay to himſelf: I am ſtill too weak, and too much abandoned to pleaſure, to quit it, or to lead a more regular and Chriſtian life. That pretext would ſtill leave all his remorſes: it is much ſooner done to ſay to himſelf, It is needleſs to live otherwiſe, for there is nothing after this life. This pretext is far more convenient, for it puts an end to every thing; it is the moſt favourable to indolence, for it eſtranges us from the

ſacraments, and from all the other ſlaveries of religion. It is much ſhorter to ſay to himſelf, "There is nothing," and to live as if he were in effect perſuaded of it; it is at once throwing off every yoke and all reſtraint; it puts an end to all the irkſome meaſures which ſinners of another deſcription ſtill guard with religion and with the conſcience. This pretext of unbelief, by perſuading us that we actually doubt, leaves us in a certain ſtate of indolence on every thing regarding religion, which prevents us from ſearching into ourſelves, and from making too melancholy reflections on our paſſions: we meanly allow ourſelves to be ſwept away by the fatal courſe, upon the general prepoſſeſſion that we believe nothing; we have few remorſes, for we think ourſelves unbelievers, and becauſe that ſuppoſition leaves us almoſt the ſame ſecurity as impiety: at leaſt, it is a diverſion which dulls and ſuſpends the ſenſibility of the conſcience; and, by operating ſo as to make us always take ourſelves for what we are not, it induces us to live as if we actually were what we wiſh to be.

That is to ſay, that the greateſt part of theſe pretended free-thinkers, and of theſe debauched and licentious unbelievers, ought to be conſidered as weak and diſſolute men, who, not having the force to live chriſtianly, nor even the hardineſs to be atheiſts, remain in that ſtate of eſtrangement from religion, as the moſt convenient to indolence; and, as they never try to quit it, they fancy that they actually hold to it: it is a kind of neutrality betwixt faith and irreligion, contrived by indolence for its own eaſe; for it requires exertion to adopt a party; and, in order to remain neuter, nothing more is required than not to think, and to live by habit, thus they never fathom, nor take any reſolution upon themſelves. Hardened and avowed impiety hath ſomething, I know not what, which ſtrikes with

with horror: religion on the other hand, preſents objects which alarm, and are by no means convenient to the paſſions. What is to be done in theſe two extremities, of which the one ſhocks reaſon, and the other ſenſes? They reſt wavering and undecided; in the mean time they enjoy the calm which is left by that ſtate of indeciſion and indifference: they live wiſhing to know what they are; for it is much more convenient to be nothing, and to live without thinking, or any knowledge of themſelves. No, my brethren, I repeat it; theſe are not unbelievers, they are cowards, who have not the courage to eſpouſe a party; who know only to live voluptuouſly, without rule, without morality, and often without decency; and who, without being atheiſts, live however without religion, for religion requires conſiſtency, reaſon, elevation of mind, firmneſs, noble ſentiments, and of all theſe they are incapable. Such, however, are the heroes of whom impiety boaſts; behold the ſuffrages upon which it grounds its defence, and oppoſes to religion, by inſulting us; behold the partiſans with whom it thinks itſelf invincible; and weak and wretched muſt its reſources indeed be, ſince it is reduced to ſeek them in men of this deſcription.

Firſt reaſon which proves that licentiouſneſs ſprings not from doubts, but doubts from licentiouſneſs. The ſecond reaſon is only a freſh proof of the firſt; it is that actually, if they do not change their life, it is not to their doubts, but ſolely to their paſſions that they hold.

For I aſk nothing of you here but candour, you who continually alledge your doubts upon our myſteries. When you ſometimes think of quitting that ſink of vice and debauchery in which you live, and when the paſſions, more tranquil, allow you to reflect, do you then oppoſe your uncertainties

certainties upon religion? Do you say to yourselves, "But "if I return it will be necessary to believe things which "seem incredible? Is this the grand difficulty? Ah! you inwardly say, but if I return it will be necessary to break off this connection, to deny myself these excesses, to terminate these societies, to shun these places, to proceed to things which I shall never support, and to adopt a manner of life to which all my inclinations are repugnant. These are what check you; these are the wall of separation which removes you from God. You speak so much to others of your doubts; how comes it that you never speak of them to yourselves? This is not a matter, therefore, of reason and of belief; it is a matter of the heart and of licentiousness; and the delay of your conversion springs not from your uncertainties upon faith, but from the sole doubt in which the violence and the empire of your passions leave you of ever being able to free yourselves from their subjection and infamy. Such, my brethren, are the true chains which bind our pretended unbelievers to their own wretchedness.

And this truth is more evident from this, that the majority of those who profess themselves unbelievers, live, nevertheless, in perpetual variations upon the point even of unbelief. In certain moments they are affected with the truths of religion: they feel themselves torn with the keenest remorses; they even apply to the servants of God most distinguished for their learning and piety, to hold converse with, and receive instructions from them: in others, they make game of these truths; they treat the servants of God with derision, and piety itself as a chimera; there is scarcely one of these sinners, even of those who make the greatest ostentation of their unbelief, whom the spectacle of an unexpected death, a fatal accident, a grievous loss, or a reverse

reverſe of fortune hath not caſt into gloomy reflections on his ſituation, and excited deſires of a more Chriſtian life; there is hardly one who, in theſe trying ſituations, ſeeks not conſolation in the ſupport of the godly, and take not ſome ſtep which leaves hopes of amendment. It is not to their companions in impiety and licentiouſneſs that they then have recourſe for conſolation; it is not by thoſe impious railleries upon our myſteries, and by that horrible philoſophy that they try to alleviate their ſufferings: theſe are diſcourſes of feſtivity and diſſipation, and not affliction and ſorrow: it is the religion of the table, of pleaſures, of riotings; it is not that of ſolemn adverſity and ſadneſs: the reliſh of impiety vaniſhes with that of pleaſures. Now, if their unbelief were founded in real uncertainties upon religion, ſo long as theſe uncertainties exiſted, unbelief ſhould be the ſame; but as their doubts ſpring only from their paſſions, and as their paſſions are not always the ſame, nor equally violent and maſters of their heart, ſo their doubts continually fluctuate like their paſſions; they increaſe, they diminiſh, they are eclipſed, they reappear, they are mutable, exactly in the ſame degree as their paſſions; in a word, they ſhare the lot of the paſſions, for they are nothing but the paſſions themſelves.

In effect, to leave nothing unſaid on this ſubject, and to make you thoroughly feel how much this vaunted profeſſion of unbelief is deſpicable, obſerve that, reply to every difficulty of the boaſting ſinner, reduce him to have nothing more to ſay, and yet ſtill he does not yield; you have not thereby gained him; he retires within himſelf, as if he had ſtill more overpowering reaſons which he diſdains to bring forward: he keeps firm, and oppoſes a myſterious and deciſive air to all thoſe proofs which he cannot reſolve. You then pity his madneſs and obſtinacy: you are miſtaken;

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be touched only for his libertine life, and his want of candour; for, let a moral diſeaſe ſtrike him on quitting you; approach his bed of anguiſh, ah! you will find this pretended unbeliever convinced; his doubts ceaſe, his uncertainties end, all that deplorable diſplay of unbelief vaniſhes and tumbles in pieces; there is no longer even queſtion of it; he has recourſe to the God of his fathers, and trembles at the judgments he made a ſhew of not believing: The miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt, called in, has no occaſion to enter into controverſy to undeceive him on his impiety: the dying ſinner anticipates his cares and his miniſtry: he is aſhamed of his blaſphemies, and repents of them: he acknowledges their falſity and deception; he makes a public reparation of them to the majeſty and to the truth of religion; he no longer demands proofs, he aſks only conſolations. Nevertheleſs, this diſeaſe hath not brought new lights upon faith; the blow which ſtrikes his fleſh has not cleared up the doubts of his mind; ah! it is becauſe it touches his heart, and terminates his riots; in a word, it is that his doubts were in his paſſions, and that whatever tends to extinguiſh his paſſions, tends, at the ſame time, to extinguiſh his doubts.

It happens, I confeſs, that ſinners are ſometimes found who puſh their madneſs and impiety even to that laſt moment: who expire in vomiting forth with their impious ſoul, blaſphemies againſt the God who is to judge them, and whom they refuſe to acknowledge. For, O my God! thou art terrible in thy judgments, and ſometimes permitteſt that the atheiſt die in his impiety. But ſuch examples are rare; and you well know, my brethren, that an entire age ſcarcely furniſhes one of theſe ſhocking ſpectacles. But view, in that laſt moment, all the others who vaunted their unbelief; ſee a ſinner on the bed of death, who

who had hitherto appeared the firmeſt in impiety, and the moſt reſolute in denying all belief; he even anticipates the propoſal of having recourſe to the church remedies: he lifts up his hands to heaven, and gives ſtriking and ſincere marks of a religion which was never effaced from the bottom of his heart; he no longer rejects, as childiſh bugbears, the threatenings and chaſtiſements of a future life; what do I ſay? this ſinner, formerly ſo firm, ſo ſtately in his pretended unbelief, ſo much above the vulgar fears, then becomes weaker, more fearful, and more credulous than the loweſt of the people; his fears are more exceſſive, his very religion more ſuperſtitious, his practices of worſhip more ſilly, and more extravagant than thoſe of the vulgar; and as one exceſs borders on its oppoſite exceſs, he is ſeen to paſs in a moment from impiety to ſuperſtition; from the firmneſs of the philoſopher, to all the weakneſs of the ignorant and ſimple.

And here it is that, with Tertullian, I would appeal to this dying ſinner, and let him hold forth, in my ſtead, againſt unbelief; it is here that, to the honour of the religion of our fathers, I would wiſh no other teſtimony of the weakneſs and of the inſincerity of the pretended atheiſt, than this expiring ſoul, who, ſurely now, can ſpeak only the language of truth; it is here that I would aſſemble all unbelievers around his bed of death; and to overthrow them by a teſtimony which could not be ſuſpicious, would ſay to him, with Tertullian: "O ſoul! before thou quit-
"teſt this earthly body, which thou art ſo ſoon to be freed
"from, ſuffer me to call upon thy teſtimony: ſpeak, in
"this laſt moment, when vanity is no more, and thou ow-
"eſt all to the truth; ſay, if thou conſidereſt the terrible
"God, into whoſe hands thou goeſt, as a chimerical be-
"ing with whom weak and credulous minds are alarmed?
"Say,

" Say, if, all now diſappearing from thine eyes, if, for " thee, all creatures returning to nothing, God alone doth " not appear to thee immortal, unchangeable, the being of " all ages and of eternity, and who filleth the heavens and " the earth? We now conſent, we, whom thou haſt al- " ways conſidered as ſuperſtitious and vulgar minds, we " conſent that thou judge betwixt us and unbelief, to " which thou haſt ever been ſo partial. Though, with re- " gard to faith, thou haſt hitherto been as a ſtranger and " the enemy of religion, religion refers its cauſe to thee, " againſt thoſe with whom the ſhocking tie of impiety had " ſo cloſely united thee. If all die with thee, why does " death appear ſo dreadful? Why theſe uplifted hands to " heaven, if there be no God who may liſten to thy prayers, " and be touched by thy groanings? If nothing thyſelf, " why belie the nothingneſs of thy being, and why trem- " ble upon the ſequel of thy deſtiny? Whence come, in " this laſt moment, theſe feelings of dread and of reſpect " for the ſupreme Being? Is it not, that they have ever " been in thee, that thou haſt impoſed upon the public by " a falſe oſtentation of impiety, and that death only un- " folds thoſe diſpoſitions of faith and of religion, which, " though dormant, have never ceaſed during life."

Yes, my brethren, could the paſſions be deſtroyed, all unbelievers would ſoon be recalled; and a final reaſon, which fully proves it, is that, if they ſeem to riſe up againſt the incomprehenſibility of our myſteries, it is ſolely for the purpoſe of combating what touches them, and of attacking the truths which intereſt the paſſions; that is to ſay, the truth of a future ſtate, and the eternity of future puniſhments; this is always the favourite concluſion and fruit of their doubts.

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In effect, if religion, without adding maxims and truths which reſtrain the paſſions, propoſed only myſteries which exceed reaſon, we may boldly ſay, that unbelievers would be rare; almoſt no one is intereſted in thoſe abſtruſe truths or errors, which it is indifferent to believe or to deny. You will find few real votaries of truth who become partiſans and zealots in ſupport of merely ſpeculative and unimportant points, becauſe they believe them to be true. The abſtruſe truths of mathematics have found, in our days, ſome zealous and eſtimable followers who have devoted themſelves to the elucidation of what is held as moſt impenetrable in the infinite ſecrets and profound obſcurities of that ſcience; but theſe are rare and ſingular men: the infection was little to be dreaded, nor, in truth, has it ſpread; they are admired, but few would wiſh to follow their example. If religion propoſed only truths equally abſtruſe, equally indifferent to the felicity of the ſenſes, equally unintereſting to the paſſions and to ſelf-love, the atheiſts would be ſtill more rare than the mathematicians. The truths of religion are objected to, merely becauſe they threaten us: no objections are made to the others, becauſe their truth or their falſity is alike indifferent.

And tell us not that it is not through ſelf-intereſt, but the ſole love of truth that the unbeliever rejects myſteries which reaſon rejects. This, I well know, is the boaſt of the pretended unbeliever, and he would wiſh us to think ſo; but of what conſequence is the truth to men, who, ſo far from either ſeeking, loving, or knowing it, wiſh even to conceal it from themſelves? What matters to them a truth beyond their reach, and to which they have never devoted a ſingle ſerious moment; which, having nothing flattering to the paſſions, can never be intereſting to theſe men of fleſh and blood, plunged in a voluptuous life?

Their object is to gratify their irregular desires, and yet have nothing to dread after this life; this is the only truth which interests them: give up that point, and the obscurity of all the other mysteries will not occupy even a thought; let them but tranquilly enjoy their crimes, and they will agree to every thing.

Thus the majority of atheists, who have left in writing the wretched fruits of their impiety, have always strove to prove that there was nothing above us; that all died with the body, and that future punishments or rewards were fables; to attract followers it was necessary to secure the suffrage of the passions. If ever they attacked the other points of religion, it was only to come to the main conclusion, that there is nothing after this life; that vices or virtues are names invented by policy to restrain the people; and that the passions are only natural and innocent inclinations, which every one may follow, because every one finds them in himself.

Behold why the impious, in the book of Wisdom, the Sadducees themselves, in the gospel, who may be considered as the fathers and predecessors of our unbelievers, never took any pains to refute the truth of the miracles related in the books of Moses, and which God formerly wrought in favour of his people, nor the promise of the Mediator made to their fathers: they attacked only the resurrection of the dead, and the immortality of the soul: that point decided every thing for them. "Man dies like "the beast," said they in the book of Wisdom; "we "know not if their nature be different, but their end and "their lot are the same: trouble us no more, therefore, "with a futurity which is not; let us enjoy life; let us "refuse ourselves no gratification: time is short; let us

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"haſten to live, for we ſhall die to-morrow, and becauſe "all ſhall die with us." No, my brethren, unbelief hath always originated in the paſſions: the yoke of faith is never rejected but in order to ſhake off the yoke of duties; and religion would never have an enemy, were it not the enemy of licentiouſneſs and vice.

But if the doubts of our unbelievers are not real, in conſequence of being formed ſolely by licentiouſneſs, they are alſo falſe, becauſe it is ignorance which adopts without comprehending them, and vanity which makes a boaſt without being able to make a reſource of them: this is what now remains to me to unfold.

PART II. The ſame anſwer might be made to the majority of thoſe who are continually vaunting their doubts upon religion, and find nothing but contradictions in what faith obliges us to believe, that Tertullian formerly made to the heathens upon all the reproaches they invented againſt the myſteries and the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt. They condemn, ſaid he, what they do not underſtand; they blame what they have never examined, and what they know only by hearſay; they blaſpheme what they are ignorant of, and they are ignorant of it, becauſe they hate it too much to give themſelves the trouble of ſearching into and knowing it. Now, continues this father, nothing is more indecent and fooliſh than boldly to decide upon what they know not; and all that religion would require of theſe frivolous and diſſolute men, who ſo warmly riſe up againſt it, is not to condemn before they are well acquainted with it.

Such, my brethren, is the ſituation of almoſt all who give themſelves out in the world as unbelievers; they have

inveſtigated neither the difficulties nor the reſpectable proofs of religion; they know not even enough to doubt of them. They hate it; for how is it poſſible to love our condemnation? and upon that hatred are founded their doubts and their only arguments to oppoſe it.

In effect, when I glance my eye over all that the Chriſtian ages have had of great men, elevated geniuſes, profound and enlightened ſcholars, who, after an entire life of ſtudy and indefatigable application, have, with an humble docility, ſubmitted to the myſteries of faith; have found the proofs of religion ſo ſtrong, that the proudeſt and moſt contractable reaſon might, in their opinion, without derogation, comply; have defended it againſt the blaſphemies of the pagans; have ſilenced the vain philoſophy of the ſages of the age, and made the folly of the croſs to triumph over all the wiſdom and erudition of Rome and Athens; it ſtrikes me, that, in order to renew the attack againſt myſteries ſo long and ſo univerſally eſtabliſhed; that, in order to be heard in appeal, if I may venture to ſay ſo, from the ſubmiſſion of ſo many ages, from the writings of ſo many great men, from ſo many victories atchieved by faith, from the conſent of the univerſe; in a word, from a preſcription ſo long and ſo well ſtrengthened, it would require either new proofs that had never yet been controverted, or new difficulties that had never yet been ſtarted, or new methods which diſcovered a weak ſide in religion as yet never found out. It ſeems to me, that, ſingly to riſe up againſt ſo many teſtimonies, ſo many prodigies, ſo many ages, ſo many divine monuments, ſo many famous perſonages, ſo many works which time hath conſecrated, and which, like pure gold, have quitted the ordeal of unbelief only more reſplendid and immortal; in a word, ſo many ſurpriſing, and till then unheard of events,

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which eſtabliſh the faith of Chriſtians, it would require very deciſive and very evident reaſons, very rare and new lights, to pretend even to doubt, much leſs to oppoſe it. Would not that man be deſervingly conſidered as out of his ſenſes, who ſhould go to defy an whole army, merely to make an oſtentation of a vain defiance, and to pride himſelf upon a burleſque bravery?

Nevertheleſs, when you examine the majority of thoſe who call themſelves unbelievers, who are continually clamouring againſt the popular prejudices, who vaunt their doubts, and defy us to ſatisfy or to anſwer them; you find that their only knowledge conſiſts of ſome hackneyed and vulgar doubts, which, in all times, have been, and ſtill continue to be, argued in the world; that they know nothing but a certain jargon of licentiouſneſs which goes from hand to hand, which they receive without examination and repeat without underſtanding: you find that their whole ſkill and ſtudy of religion are reduced to ſome licentious ſayings, which, if I may deſcend ſo low, are the proper language of the ſtreets; to certain maxims which, through mere repetition, begin to reliſh of proverbial meanneſs. You will find no foundation, no principle, no ſequence of doctrine, no knowledge even of the religion which they attack: they are men immerſed in pleaſure, and who would be very ſorry to have a ſpare moment to devote to the inveſtigation of weariſome truths which they are indifferent whether they know or not; men of a light and ſuperficial character, and wholly unfitted for a moment's ſerious meditation and inveſtigation; let me again repeat, men drowned in voluptuouſneſs, and in whom even that portion of penetration and underſtanding, accorded by nature, hath been debaſed and extinguiſhed by debauchery.

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Such are the formidable ſupports of unbelief againſt the knowledge of God: behold the frivolous, diſſipated, and ignorant characters who dare to tax, with credulity and ignorance, all that the Chriſtian ages have had, and ſtill have of learned, able, and celebratred perſonages: they know the language of doubts; bút they have learned it by rote, for they never formed them; they only repeat what they have heard: it is a tradition of ignorance and impiety: they have no doubts: they only preſerve, for thoſe to come, the language of irreligion and doubts; they are not unbelievers, they are only the echoes of unbelief; in a word, they know how to expreſs a doubt, but they are too ignorant to doubt themſelves.

And a proof of what I advance is, that, in all other doubts, we heſitate only in order to be inſtructed; every thing is examined which can elucidate the concealed truth. But here the doubt is merely for doubting's ſake; a proof that we are equally unintereſted in the doubt, as in the truth which it conceals from us; they would be very ſorry were they under the neceſſity of clearing up either the falſity, or the truth of the uncertainties which they pretend to have upon our myſteries. Yes, my brethren, were the puniſhment of doubters, to be that of an indiſpenſible obligation to ſeek the truth, no one would doubt; no one would purchaſe, at ſuch a price, the pleaſure of calling himſelf an unbeliever; few indeed would be capable of it: deciſive proof that they do not doubt, and that they are as little attached to their doubts as to religion (for their knowledge in both is much about the ſame;) but only that they have loſt thoſe firſt feelings of diſcretion and of faith which left us ſtill ſome veſtige of reſpect for the religion of our fathers. Thus, it is doing too much honour to men, ſo worthy both of pity and contempt, to ſuppoſe that they have taken

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a ſide, that they have embraced a ſyſtem; you honour them too much by ranking them among the impious followers of a Socinus, by ennobling them with the ſhocking titles of deiſts or atheiſts: alas! they are nothing; they are of no ſyſtem; at leaſt, they neither know themſelves what they are, nor can they tell us what that ſyſtem is; and, ſtrange as it may appear, they have found out the ſecret of forming a ſtate more deſpicable, more mean, and more unworthy of reaſon, than even that of impiety; and it is even doing them credit to call them by the ſhocking title of unbeliever, which had hitherto been conſidered as the ſhame of humanity, and the higheſt reproach of man.

And, to conclude this article with a reflection which confirms the ſame truth, and it is very humiliating for our pretended unbelievers, I obſerve that they, who affect to treat us as weak and credulous minds, who vaunt their reaſon, who accuſe us of grounding a religion upon the popular prejudices, and of believing, ſolely becauſe our predeceſſors have believed; they, I ſay, are unbelievers, and doubt upon the ſole and deplorable authority of a debauchee, whom they have often heard to ſay, that futurity is a bugbear, and made uſe of as a ſcarecrow to frighten only children and the common people; ſuch is their own knowledge, and their only uſe of reaſon. They are impious, as they accuſe us of being believers without examination, and through credulouſneſs; but through a credulity which can find no excuſe but in madneſs and folly; the authority of a ſingle impious diſcourſe, pronounced in a bold and deciſive tone, hath ſubjugated their reaſon, and ranked them in the liſts of impiety. They call us credulous, in yielding to the authority of the prophets, of the apoſtles, of men inſpired by God, of the ſhining miracles wrought to eſtabliſh the truth of our myſteries, and to that venerable tradition of holy paſtors,

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who, from age to age, have tranſmitted to us the charge of doctrine and of truth; that is to ſay, to the greateſt authority that hath ever been on the earth; and they think themſelves leſs credulous, and it appears to them more worthy of reaſon, to ſubmit to the authority of a free-thinker who in the moment of debauchery, pronounces, with a firm tone, that there is no God, yet, moſt likely, inwardly belies his own words. Ah! my brethren, how much does man degrade and render himſelf contemptible when he arrogates a falſe glory from being no longer in the belief of a God!

Thus, why is it, think you, that our pretended unbelievers are ſo deſirous of ſeeing real atheiſts confirmed in impiety: that they ſeek and entice them even from foreign countries, like a Spinoſa, if the fact be, that he was called into France to be heard and conſulted? It is becauſe our unbelievers are not firm in unbelief, nor can they find any who are ſo; and, in order to harden themſelves, they would gladly ſee ſome one actually confirmed in that deteſtable cauſe: they ſeek, in precedent, reſources and defences againſt their own conſcience; and, not daring of themſelves to become impious, they expect from an example what their reaſon and even their heart refuſes; and, in ſo doing, they ſurely fall into a credulity much more childiſh and abſurd than that with which they reproach believers. A Spinoſa, that monſter, who, after embracing various religions, ended with none, was not anxious to find out ſome profeſſed free-thinker who might confirm him in the cauſe of irreligion and atheiſm: he formed to himſelf that impenetrable chaos of impiety, that work of confuſion and darkneſs in which the ſole deſire of not believing in God can ſupport the wearineſs and diſguſt of thoſe who read it; in which, excepting the impiety, all is unintelligible; and

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which would, from its birth, have ſunk into oblivion, had it not, to the ſhame of humanity, attacked the ſupreme Being: that impious wretch, I ſay, lived concealed, retired, tranquil: his dark productions were his only occupation, and, to harden himſelf he needed only himſelf. But thoſe who ſo eagerly ſought him, who longed to ſee and conſult him, thoſe frivolous and diſſolute men were fools who wiſhed to become impious; and who, not finding ſufficient authority to remain believers in the teſtimony of all ages, of all nations, and of all the great men who have honoured religion, ſought in the ſingle teſtimony of an obſcure individual, of a deſerter from every religion, of a monſter obliged to hide himſelf from the eyes of men, a deplorable and monſtrous authority which might confirm them in impiety, and defend them from their own conſcience. Great God! let the impious here hide their faces; let them ceaſe to make an oſtentation of an unbelief which is the fruit of their depravity and ignorance, and no longer ſpeak, but with bluſhes, of the ſubmiſſion of believers: it is all a language of deceit, they give to vanity what we give to truth.

I ſay vanity; and this is the grand and final reaſon which more clearly expoſes all the falſity and weakneſs of unbelief. Yes, my brethren, all our pretended unbelievers are bullies, who give themſelves out for what they are not; they conſider unbelief as conveying the idea of ſomething above the common; they are continually boaſting that they believe nothing, and, by dint of boaſting, they at laſt perſuade themſelves of it: like certain muſhroom characters among us, who, though touching the obſcurity and vulgarity of their anceſtors, have the deplorable vanity of wiſhing to be thought of an illuſtrious birth, and deſcended from the greateſt names; by dint of blazoning and re-

peating it, they attain almoſt to the belief of it themſelves. It is the ſame with our pretended unbelievers; they ſtill touch, as I may ſay, that faith which they have received at their birth, which ſtill flows with their blood, and is not yet effaced from their heart; but they think it a vulgarity and meanneſs, at which they bluſh; by dint of ſaying and boaſting that they believe nothing, they are convinced that they really do not believe, and have conſequently a much higher opinion of themſelves.

1ſtly, Becauſe that deplorable profeſſion of unbelief ſuppoſes an uncommon underſtanding, ſtrength and ſuperiority of mind, and a ſingularity which is pleaſing and flattering; on the contrary, that the paſſions infer only licentiouſneſs and debauchery, of which all men are capable, though they are not ſo of that wonderful ſuperiority attributed to itſelf by impiety.

2dly, Becauſe faith is ſo weakened in our age, that we find few in the world, who pique themſelves upon wit and and a little more knowledge or erudition than others, who do not allow themſelves doubts and difficulties upon the auguſt and moſt ſacred parts of religion. It would be a diſgrace, therefore, in their company to appear religious and believers: they are men high in the public eſteem, and any reſemblance to them is flattering; in adopting their language, their talents and reputation are thought likewiſe to be adopted; and not to dare to follow or to copy them would, it ſeems, be making a public avowal of weakneſs and mediocrity: miſerable and childiſh vanity! Beſides, becauſe they have heard ſay that certain characters diſtinguiſhed in their age did not believe; and as the memory of their talents and great actions has been preſerved only with that of their irreligion, they vaunt theſe grand examples;

examples: after ſuch illuſtrious models, it appears dignified to believe nothing; their names are conſtantly in their mouths: it is a falſe embroidery, where a laughable vanity and littleneſs of mind alone are conſpicuous, ſince nothing can be more miſerable or mean than to give ourſelves out for what we are not, or to aſſume the perſonage of another.

3dly, and *laſtly*, Becauſe the language of impiety is, in general, the conſequence of licentious ſociety: we wiſh to appear the ſame as our companions in debauchery; for it would be a ſhame to be diſſolute, and yet ſeem to believe, in the very preſence of our accomplices in riot. It is a ſorry cauſe that of a debauchee who ſtill believes; impiety and licentiouſneſs are the only colour for debauchery; without theſe he would be only a novice in profligacy: the dread of puniſhments and of an hell is left to thoſe yet unexerciſed in guilt; that remain of religion ſeems to favour ſtill too much of childhood and the college. But when attained to a certain length in debauchery, ah! theſe vulgar weakneſſes muſt all be ſoared above; their opinion of themſelves is raiſed in proportion as they can perſuade others that they are now above all theſe fears; they even mock thoſe who appear ſtill to dread: like the wife of Job, they ſay, with a tone of irony and impiety, "Doſt "thou ſtill retain thine integrity? Art thou ſo ſim- "ple as to believe all theſe tales with which thy childhood "hath been alarmed? Thou ſeeſt not that all theſe are mere- "ly the viſions of weak minds, and that the more know- "ing, who preach them up ſo much, believe not a word "of them themſelves?"

O my God! How mean and deſpicable is the impious man who ſeems ſo proudly to contemn thee? He is a coward,

coward, who outwardly inſults, yet inwardly fears thee; he is a vain boaſter, who makes a ſhew of unbelief, but tells not what paſſes within; he is an impoſtor, who, wiſhing to deceive us, cannot ſucceed in deceiving himſelf; he is a fool, who without a ſingle inducement, adopts all the horrors of impiety; he is a madman, who, unable to attain irreligion, or to extinguiſh the terrors of his conſcience, extinguiſhes in himſelf all modeſty and decency, and endeavours to make an impious merit of it in the eyes of men; who madly ſacrifices, to the deplorable vanity of being thought an unbeliever, his religion which he ſtill preſerves, his God whom he dreads, his conſcience which he feels, his eternal ſalvation which he hopes. What a deſertion of God, and what a ſink of madneſs and folly!

And could you, my brethren, (and in this wiſh I compriſe the whole fruit of this diſcourſe) who ſtill feel a reverence for the religion of our fathers, but be ſenſible of the contemptability of thoſe men, who give themſelves out as free-thinkers, and whom you often ſo much eſteem; you would then comprehend how much the profeſſion of unbelief, now ſo faſhionable among us, is, of all other characters, the moſt frivolous, cowardly, and worthy of laughter; you would then know that every thing mean and ſhameful, even according to the world, is concealed under this oſtentation of impiety, which the corruption of our manners hath now rendered ſo common even to both ſexes.

1ſtly, Of licentiouſneſs. They reach the avowal of impiety only when the heart is profoundly corrupted; when they actually live in private in the moſt ſhameful debauchery; and, were they known for what they are, they would for ever be diſhonoured even in the eyes of men.

2dly,

2dly Of meanneſs. They act the philoſopher and the wit, while, in ſecret, they are the moſt ſneaking, the moſt diſſolute, the moſt abandoned, and the weakeſt of ſinners, the verieſt ſlaves of every paſſion unworthy of modeſty, and even of reaſon.

3dly Of deceit and impoſition. They act a borrowed character; they give themſelves out for what they are not; and, while ſo loudly exclaiming againſt the godly, and treating them as impoſtors and hypocrites, they are themſelves the very cheat they decry, and the hypocrite of impiety and free-thinking.

4thly, Of oſtentation and wretched vanity. They act the hero, while inwardly trembling; for, on the firſt ſignal of death, they betray more cowardice than even the commoneſt of the people: they make a ſhow of openly inſulting that God whom they ſtill inwardly dread, and even hope to render favourable one day to themſelves: a character of childiſhneſs and buffoonery, which the world itſelf hath always conſidered as the loweſt, the vileſt, and the moſt riſible of all characters.

5thly, Of temerity. Without erudition or knowledge, they dare to ſet up as deciders upon what they are totally ignorant; to condemn the greateſt characters of every age; and to decide upon important points to which they have never given, and, indeed, to which they are incapable of giving, a ſingle moment of ſerious attention: an indecency of character which can accord only with men who have nothing more to loſe on the ſide of honour.

6thly, Of folly. They pride themſelves in appearing without religion; that is to ſay, without character, morals, probity,

probity, fear of God and of man, and capable of every thing excepting virtue and innocence.

Thirdly, Of ſuperſtition. We have ſeen theſe pretended free-thinkers, who refuſe to conſult the oracles of the holy prophets, conſulting conjurors; admitting in men that knowledge of futurity which they refuſe to God; giving into every childiſh credulity, while riſing up againſt the majeſty of faith; expecting their aggrandizement and fortune from a deceitful oracle, and unwilling to hope their ſalvation from the oracles of our holy books; and, in a word, ridiculouſly believing in demons, while they make a boaſt of diſbelieving a God.

Laſtly, What, in my opinion, is moſt deplorable in theſe characters is, that they are in a ſituation which precludes almoſt every hope of ſalvation. For an actual unbeliever, if ſuch there be, may, in a moment, be ſtricken of God, and overwhelmed, as it were, under the weight of that glory and majeſty which he unknowingly had blaſphemed: the eyes of this unfortunate wretch may ſtill be opened by the Lord in his mercy; he may make his light to ſhine through his darkneſs, and reveal that truth which he reſiſts only becauſe he knows it not: he has ſtill reſources, ſuch as perhaps rectitude, conſiſtency, principles, (of error and illuſion I confeſs, but ſtill they are principles:) he will be equally warm for his God when known, as he was his enemy when unknown. But the unbelievers, of whom I ſpeak, have ſcarcely a way left of returning to God; they inſult the Lord whom they know; they blaſpheme that religion which they ſtill preſerve in their heart; they reſiſt the impreſſions of conſcience which ſtill inwardly eſpouſes the cauſe of faith againſt themſelves; in vain does the light of God ſhine upon their heart, it ſerves only

to

to render more inexcuſeable the treachery of their impiety. Were they, ſaith Jeſus Chriſt, abſolutely blind, they would be worthy of pity, and their ſin would be leſs: but at preſent they ſee; and conſequently the guilt of their irreligion is blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which dwelleth for ever upon their head.

Let us repair then, my brethren, by our reſpect for the religion of our fathers; by a continual gratitude towards the Lord, who hath permitted us to be born in the way of ſalvation, into which ſo many nations have not as yet been deemed worthy to enter; let us repair, I ſay, the ſcandal of unbelief ſo common in this age, ſo countenanced among us, and which, become more bold through the number and quality of its partiſans, no longer hides its head, but openly ſhews itſelf, and braves, as it were, the religion of the prince, and the zeal of the paſtors. Let us have in horror thoſe impious and deſpicable men, who pride themſelves in turning into ridicule the majeſty of the religion they profeſs: let us fly them as monſters unworthy to live, not only among believers, but even among thoſe connected together by honour, probity, and reaſon; far from applauding their impious diſcourſes, let us cover them with ſhame by that contempt which they merit. It is ſo low and ſo mean, even according to the world, to diſhonour that religion in which one lives; it is ſo beautiful, and there is ſo much real dignity in making a pride of reſpecting and of defending it, even with an air of authority and of indignation, againſt the ſilly ſpeeches which attack it. By deſpiſing unbelief, let us deprive it of the deplorable glory it ſeeks; from the moment they are deſpiſed unbelievers will be rare among us; and the ſame vanity which forms their doubts will ſoon annihilate or conceal them, when it ſhall be a diſgrace among us to appear impious,

impious, and a glory to be a believer. It is thus that the ſcandal ſhall be done away, and that altogether we ſhall glorify the Lord in the ſame faith, and in the expectation of the eternal promiſes. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

EVIDENCE OF THE LAW OF GOD.

JOHN viii. 46.

And If I ſay the truth, why do ye not believe me?

JESUS Chriſt had hitherto confuted the incredulity of the Jews by his works and his miracles; at preſent, he recalls them to the judgment of their own conſcience and to the evidence of the truth, which, in ſpite of themſelves, rendered teſtimony to his doctrine and to his miniſtry. Nevertheleſs, as they ſhut their eyes againſt the evidence of his miracles, in accuſing him of operating them through the miniſtry of devils, ſo they likewiſe harden themſelves againſt the evidence of his doctrine and of his miſſion, ſo clearly foretold in the ſcriptures, by alledging pretended obſcurities, which rendered them, in their eyes, ſtill doubtful and ſuſpicious.

For, my brethren, however evident may be the truth, that is to ſay, the law of God, whether in our heart, where it is written in ſhining and ineffaceable characters, or in the rules which Jeſus Chriſt hath left to us; we would always, either that our conſcience ſee nothing in it but what our paſſions ſee, or that theſe rules be not ſo explicit but

what we may always be able to find out ſome favourable interpretation and mollification of them.

In effect, two pretexts are commonly oppoſed by the ſinners of the world againſt the evidence of truths, the moſt terrible of the law of God. *1ſtly*, In order to calm themſelves on a thouſand abuſes, authoriſed by the world, they tell us that they believe themſelves to be in ſafety in that ſtate; that their conſcience reproaches them with nothing on that head; and that, could they be perſuaded that they were in the path of error, they would inſtantly quit it. Firſt pretext which is oppoſed to the evidence of the law of God: candour and tranquillity of conſcience.

2dly, They oppoſe that the goſpel is not ſo clear and ſo explicit on certain points as we maintain it to be; that each interprets it in his own way, and makes it to ſay whatever he wiſhes; that what appears ſo poſitive to us, appears not ſo to all the world. Second pretext: the obſcurity and uncertainty of the rules

Now, I ſay that the law of God hath a two-fold mark of evidence, which ſhall overthrow theſe two pretexts, and ſhall condemn, at the day of judgment, all the vain excuſes of ſinners.

1ſtly, It is evident in the conſcience of the ſinner: firſt reflection. *2dly*, It is evident in the ſimplicity of the rules: ſecond reflection. The evidence of the law of God in the conſcience of men: firſt character of the law of God, which ſhall judge the falſe ſecurity and the pretended candour of worldly ſouls. The evidence of the law of God in the ſimplicity of its rules: ſecond character of the law of God, which ſhall judge the affected uncertainties,

tainties, and the falſe interpretations of ſinners. And thus it is, O my God! that thy holy law ſhall judge the world, and that the criminal conſcience ſhall one day be confounded before thy tribunal, both by the lights of his own conſcience, and by the perſpicuity of thy heavenly maxims.

PART I. It is rather ſurpriſing that the greateſt part of worldly ſouls, in juſtification of the abuſes of the world and the danger of its maxims, alledge to us the candour and the tranquillity of their conſcience. Beſides, that peace and ſecurity, in the falſe paths of iniquity, are rather their puniſhment than their excuſe; and that, were it even true that the conſcience ſhould reproach them with nothing in manners regulated ſolely according to the falſe judgments of the world, that ſtate would ſtill be only ſo much the worſe, and more hopeleſs of ſalvation: it appears that, of all tribunals, that of conſcience is the laſt to which an unbelieving ſoul ſhould appeal; and that nothing is leſs favourable to the errors of a ſinner than the ſinner himſelf.

I know that there are hardened ſouls, to whom no ray of grace or of light can carry conviction; who live without remorſe and without anxiety in the horrors of an infamous licentiouſneſs; in whom all conſcience ſeems extinguiſhed, and who carry the exceſs of their blindneſs, ſays St. Auguſtin, ſo far, as even to glory in their very blindneſs. But theſe are only rare and dreadful examples of God's juſtice upon men; and if ſuch have appeared upon the earth, they only prove how far his neglect and the power of his wrath may ſometimes go.

Yes,

Yes, my brethren, whether we affect boldly and openly to caſt off the authority of the law, like the impious and the licentious; whether we endeavour to molify and artificially to reconcile it with our paſſions, by favourable interpretations, like the greateſt part of worldly ſouls and common ſinners; our conſcience renders a two-fold teſtimony within us to this divine law: a teſtimony of truth to the equity and to the neceſſity of its maxims, and a teſtimony of ſeverity to the exactitude of its rules.

I ſay, in the firſt place, a teſtimony of truth to the equity of its maxims. For, my brethren, God is too wiſe not to love order; and he is, at the ſame time, too good not to wiſh our welfare. His law muſt conſequently bear theſe two characters; a character of equity, and a character of goodneſs: a character of equity, which regulates all the duties; a character of goodneſs, which makes us to find our peace and our happineſs here below, in duty and in regularity.

Thus we feel, in the bottom of our hearts, that theſe rules are juſt and reaſonable; that the law of God commands nothing but what is conſiſtent with the real intereſts of man; that nothing is more conſonant to the reaſonable creature than gentleneſs, humanity, temperance, modeſty, and all the virtues recommended in the goſpel; that the paſſions prohibited by the law are the ſole ſource of all our troubles; that the more we deviate from the precept, and from the law, the more do we remove ourſelves from peace and tranquillity of heart; and that the Lord, in forbidding us to yield ourſelves up to impetuous and iniquitous paſſions, hath only forbidden us to yield ourſelves up to our

own

own tyrants, and that his only intention hath been to render us happy in rendering us believers.

Behold a teſtimony which the law of God finds in the bottom of our hearts. Hurried away by the deluſion of the ſenſes, we vainly caſt off the yoke of the holy rules; we can never ſucceed in juſtifying, even to ourſelves, our own irregularities; we always internally adopt the intereſts of the law againſt ourſelves; we always find within us a juſtification of the rules againſt the paſſions. We cannot corrupt this internal witneſs of the truth, which pleads within us for virtue; we always feel a ſecret miſunderſtanding between our inclinations and our lights: the law of God, born in our heart, inceſſantly ſtruggles there againſt the law of the fleſh foreign to man; it maintains its truths there in ſpite of ourſelves, if it cannot maintain its authority; it officiates as a cenſurer, if it cannot ſerve as a director; in a word, it renders us unhappy if it cannot render us believers.

Thus, in vain do we ſometimes give way to all the bitterneſs of hatred and revenge; we immediately feel that this cruel pleaſure is not made for the heart of man; that to hate, is, in fact, to puniſh ourſelves; and, in returning to ourſelves after the tranſports of paſſion, we find within us a principle of humanity which diſavows their violence, and clearly points out to us, that gentleneſs and kindneſs were our firſt inclinations; and that in commanding us to love our brethren, the law of God hath only done ſo, as to conſult the right and moſt reaſonable feelings of our heart, and to reconcile us with ourſelves. Thou art more righteous than I, ſaid Saul to David, in the time of his ſtrongeſt hatred againſt him. That goodneſs, born in the heart of all

all men, forced from him that confeſſion, and inwardly diſavowed the injuſtice and the cruelty of his revenge.

In vain do we plunge ourſelves into brutal and ſenſual gratifications, and madly range after whatever may ſatisfy the inſatiable deſires of pleaſure: we quickly feel, that debauchery leads us too far to be agreeable to nature: that whatever enſlaves and tyranniſes over us, overturns the order of our firſt inſtitution; and that the goſpel, in prohibiting the voluptuous paſſions, hath provided for the tranquillity of our heart, and for reſtoring to us all its elevation and nobility. How many hired ſervants of my father's, ſaid the prodigal ſtill bound in the chains of vice, have bread enough, and to ſpare! and I conſume my days in wearineſs, and in ſhame. It was a remain of reaſon and of nobility which ſtill ſpake in the bottom of his heart.

Laſtly inveſtigate all the precepts of the law of God, and you will fell that they have a neceſſary connection with the heart of man; that they are rules founded upon a profound knowledge of what takes place within us; that they ſolely contain the remedies of our moſt ſecret evils, and the ſuccours of our moſt righteous inclinations; and that none but Him alone, who knoweth the bottom of hearts, could be capable of laying down ſuch maxims to men. The heathens themſelves, in whom all truth was not yet extinguiſhed, rendered this glory to the Chriſtian morality; they were forced to admire the wiſdom of its precepts, the neceſſity of its reſtraints, the ſanctity of its counſels, the good ſenſe and ſublimity of all its rules; they were aſtoniſhed to find, in the diſcourſes of Jeſus Chriſt, a more ſublime philoſophy than in the Roman or Grecian ſchools; and they could not comprehend how the ſon of Mary ſhould be better acquainted with the duties, the deſires,

fires, and all the ſecret folds of the human heart, than Plato and all his diſciples.

Will you tell us, after this, that nature is our firſt law, and that tendencies to pleaſures, inherent in our being, can never be crimes; I have often ſaid it; it is an impiety only of converſation; it is an oſtentation of free-thinking, of which vanity makes a boaſt, but which truth inwardly belies. Auguſtin in his errors had ſpared no pains to efface from the bottom of his heart, thoſe remains of faith and of conſcience which ſtill recalled him to the truth; he had eagerly ſought, in the moſt impious opinions, and the moſt ſhocking errors, wherewithal to comfort himſelf againſt his crimes; his mind flying the light which purſued him, wandered from impiety to impiety, and from error to error; nevertheleſs, in ſpite of all his efforts and flights, the truth, and always victorious in the bottom of his ſoul, proclaimed its triumph in ſpite of himſelf; he could ſucceed neither in ſeducing nor in quieting himſelf in his diſorders: "I bore, O my God, ſays he, a conſcience racked, and ſtill bleeding as it were, from the grievous wounds which my paſſions inceſſantly made there; I was a burden to myſelf; I could no longer ſuſtain my own heart; I turned myſelf on every ſide, and no where could it find eaſe; I knew not where to lay it, that I might be delivered from it, and that mine anxiety might be comforted."

Behold the teſtimony which a ſinner, who, to all the keenneſs of the paſſions, added the impiety of opinions, and the abuſe of lights, renders of himſelf. And theſe examples are of every age; our own has beheld famous and avowed ſinners, who made an infamous boaſt of not believing in God, and who were looked upon as heroes in impiety and free-thinking; we have ſeen them, touched at laſt

laſt with repentance like Auguſtin, and recalled from their errors, we have ſeen them, I ſay, make an open avowal, that they had never been able to ſucceed in effacing the rules and truth from their ſoul; that, amidſt all their moſt ſhocking impieties and exceſſes, their heart, ſtill Chriſtian, inwardly belied their deriſions and blaſphemies; that, before men, they vaunted a ſtrength of mind which forſook them in private; that that apparent unbelief concealed the moſt cruel remorſes, and the moſt gloomy fears; and that they had never been firm and tranquil in guilt.

Yes, my brethren, guilt, always timorous, every where bears a witneſs of condemnation againſt itſelf. Every where you render homage, by your inward anxieties and remorſes, to that ſanctity of that law which you violate; every where a fund of wearineſs and of ſorrow, inſeparable from guilt, makes you to feel that regularity and innocence are the only happineſs which was intended for you on the earth; you vainly diſplay an affected intrepidity; the guilty conſcience always betrays itſelf. Cruel terrors march every where before you: ſolitude diſquiets, darkneſs alarms you; you fancy to ſee phantoms coming from every quarter to reproach you with the ſecret errors of your ſoul; unlucky dreams fill you with black and gloomy fancies; and guilt, after which you run with ſo much reliſh, purſues you afterwards like a cruel vulture, and fixes itſelf upon you, to tear your heart, and to puniſh you for the pleaſure it had formerly given you. O my God! what reſources haſt thou not left in our heart to recal us to thee! And how powerful is the protection which the goodneſs and the righteouſneſs of thy law finds in the bottom of our being! Firſt teſtimony which the conſcience renders to the law of God, a teſtimony of truth to the ſanctity of its maxims.

But

But it alſo renders a teſtimony of ſeverity to the exactitude of its rules. For a ſecond illuſion of the greateſt part of worldly ſouls, who live exempted from great irregularities, but who otherwiſe live amidſt all the pleaſures, all the abuſes, all the ſenſualities, and all the diſſipations authoriſed by the world, is, that of wiſhing to perſuade themſelves that the goſpel requires no more, and to perſuade us, that their conſcience reproaches them with nothing, and that they believe themſelves ſafe in that ſtate. Now, I ſay that here the worldly conſcience is again not candid, and is deceived; and that, in ſpite of all thoſe mollifications which they endeavour to juſtify to themſelves, it renders, in the bottom of our hearts, a teſtimony of ſeverity to the law of God.

In effect, order requires that all our paſſions be regulated by the bridle of the law; all our inclinations, corrupted in their ſource, have occaſion for a rule to rectify and correct them: we confeſs this ourſelves; we feel that our corruption pervades the ſmalleſt as well as the greateſt things; that ſelf-love infects all our proceedings; and that we every where find ourſelves weak, and in continual oppoſition to order and duty: we feel, then, that the rule ought, in no inſtance, to be favourable to our inclinations; that we ought every where to find it ſevere, becauſe it ought every where to be in oppoſition to us; that the law cannot be in unity with us; that whatever favours our inclinations, can never be the remedy intended to cure them; that whatever flatters our deſires, can never be the bridle which is to reſtrain them; in a word, that whatever nouriſhes ſelf-love, is not the law which is eſtabliſhed for the ſole purpoſe of deſtroying and annihilating it. Thus, by an inward feeling, inſeparable from our being, we always diſcriminate ourſelves from the law; our inclinations from its rules; our pleaſures from its duties; and, in all

dubious actions where we decide in favour of our inclinations, we perfectly feel that we are deviating from the law of God, always more rigid than ourselves.

And allow me here, my brethren, to appeal to your conscience itself, which you always alledge, and to which you continually refer us. Are you, honestly speaking, at your ease, as you wish to persuade us, in this life, altogether of pleasures, of dissipation, of indolence, and of sensuality; in a word, in this worldly life, of which you constantly maintain the innocence? Have you hitherto been able to succeed in persuading yourselves, that it is the path which leads to salvation? Do you not feel that something more is required of you by the gospel than you perform? Would you wish to appear before God with nothing to offer to him but these pleasures, these amusements which you call innocent, and of which the principal groundwork of life is composed? I put the question to you. In those moments when, more warmly affected perhaps by grace, you propose seriously to think upon eternity, do you not place, in the plan which you then form of a new life, the privation of almost all the very things in which you are continually telling us that you see no harm? Do you not begin by promising to yourselves, that, solely occupied then with your salvation, you will renounce the excesses of gaming, the theatres, the vanities and indecencies of dress, the dissipation of public assemblies and pleasures; that you will devote more time to prayer, to retirement, to holy reading, and to the duties of religion? Now, what is it that you hereby acknowledge, unless it be, that, while you renounce not all these abuses; that you devote not more time to all these pious duties, you think not seriously upon your salvation; you ought to have no pretension to it; you are in the path of death and perdition.

But,

But, beſides, you who carry ſo far the ſeverity of your cenſures againſt the godly, recollect all the rigour of your maxims, and of your deriſions upon their conduct; do you not blame, do you not continually cenſure thoſe perſons who wiſh to connect, with a public profeſſion of piety, thoſe abuſes, thoſe amuſements, of which you are the daily apologiſt, and who wiſh to enjoy the reputation of virtue without loſing any of the pleaſures of the world? Do you not mock their piety as a piece of mere grimace? Here it is that you emphatically diſplay all the auſterity of the Chriſtian life. Do you not ſay that it is neceſſary either totally to renounce the world, or to continue to live as the world lives; and that all theſe ambiguous virtues ſerve only to decry the true virtue? I agree with you in this; but I reply to you: Your conſcience dictates to you that it is not ſafe to give yourſelf partially to God, and your conſcience reproaches you nothing, as you ſay, in a life in which God enters not at all? You condemn thoſe miſtaken ſouls whom, at leaſt, an apparent diviſion between the world and Jeſus Chriſt may comfort? And you juſtify to us your conduct, you who have nothing in its juſtification but the abuſes of the world and the danger of its habits? Do you then believe that the path of ſalvation is more rugged for thoſe who profeſs piety than for you? That the world hath privileges thereon, which are forfeited from the moment that we mean to ſerve God? Be conſiſtent then with yourſelves; and either condemn no more a worldly virtue, or no longer juſtify the world itſelf; ſince whatever you blame in that virtue is only that portion of it which the world ſupplies.

And, in order to make you more ſenſibly feel how far you are from being candid on this head, you continually take a pride in repeating that we deſpair of human weakneſs;

neſs; that, in order to act up to all that we ſay in theſe Chriſtian pulpits, it would be neceſſary to withdraw to the deſerts, or to be angels rather than men: nevertheleſs, render glory to the force of truth. If a miniſter of the goſpel were to deliver to you from this place a doctrine quite oppoſite to that which we teach; were he to announce to you the ſame maxims which you daily hold forth in the world; were he to preach to you in this place of the truth, that the goſpel is not ſo ſevere as it is publiſhed; that we may love the world and yet ſerve God; that there is no harm in gaming, in pleaſures, in theatres, except what we ourſelves occaſion; that we muſt live like the world while we live in the world; that all that language of the croſs, of penitence, of mortification, and of ſelf-denial, is more calculated for cloiſters than for the court, and for perſons of a certain rank; and laſtly, that God is too good to conſider as crimes, a thouſand things which are become habitual, and of which we wiſh you to make a matter of conſcience; were he, I ſay, to preach theſe maxims to you in this holy place, what would you think of him? What would you ſay to his new doctrine? What idea would you have of this new apoſtle? Would you conſider him as a man come down from heaven to announce to you this new goſpel? Would you believe him to be better inſtructed than we in the holy truths of ſalvation, and in the rules of the Chriſtian life? You would laugh at his ignorance, or his folly; you would perhaps be ſtruck with horror at the profanation which he would make of his miniſtry.

And what, my brethren, theſe maxims announced before the altars would appear to you as blaſphemy or madneſs; and, promulgated in your daily converſations, they would become rules of reaſon and of wiſdom? In the mouth of a miniſter of the goſpel, you would look upon them

them as the ſpeeches of a madman; and, in your mouth, they ſhould appear more ſolid and more weighty? You would laugh, or rather you would be ſtruck with horror, at a preacher who ſhould announce them to you; and you wiſh to perſuade us that you ſpeak ſeriouſly, and that you are conſiſtent with yourſelves when, with ſo much confidence, you hold them forth to us.

. Ah! my brethren, how treacherous we are to God! and how terrible will he be when he ſhall come to avenge, upon the lights of our own heart, the honour of his holy law! Our apparent obſtinacy for the abuſes of the world, of which we maintain the innocence, is a ſecret perſuaſion that the world and all its abuſes are a path of perdition; we publicly juſtify what we condemn in private; we are the hypocrites of the world and of its pleaſures: and, through a moſt deplorable deſtiny, our life paſſes away in diſſembling with ourſelves, and is obſtinately determining to periſh in ſpite of ourſelves. And ſurely, ſays the apoſtle John, if our heart, notwithſtanding all our ſelf-blindneſs, cannot help already condemning us in ſecret, have we more indulgence to expect from the terrible and ſovereign Judge of hearts than from our heart itſelf?

Thus, my brethren, ſtudy the law of God in your own conſcience, and you will ſee that it is not more favourable than we to your paſſions; conſult the lights of your heart, and you will feel that they perfectly accord with our maxims; liſten to the voice of truth, which ſpeaks within you, and you will admit, that we only repeat what it is continually whiſpering to your heart? You have no occaſion, ſays St. Auguſtin, to apply to able men, in order to have the greateſt part of your doubts cleared up; go no farther than yourſelves for explanations and anſwers; apply to yourſelves

yourſelves for what you have to do; liſten to the deciſions of your heart; follow the firſt impulſe of your conſcience, and you will always determine for that party moſt conformable to the law of God: the firſt impreſſion of the heart is always for the ſtrictneſs of the law, againſt the ſoftenings of ſelf-love: your conſcience will always go farther, and will be more ſtrict than ourſelves; and, if you have occaſion for our deciſions, it will rather be in order to moderate the ſeverity, than to expoſe the falſe indulgence of it.

Behold the firſt manner in which the law of God ſhall one day judge us: that law, manifeſted in the conſcience of the ſinner, and as if born with him, ſhall riſe up againſt him; our heart, marked with the ſeal of truth, ſhall be the witneſs to depoſe for our condemnation: our lights ſhall be oppoſed to our actions, our remorſes to our manners, our ſpeeches to our thoughts, our inward ſentiments to our public proceedings, and ourſelves to ourſelves. Thus we bear, each of us, our condemnation in our own heart. The Lord will not bring other proof than ourſelves, to determine the deciſion of our eternal reprobation; and the ſoul before the tribunal of God, ſays Turtullian, ſhall appear at the ſame time, both the criminal condemned, and the witneſs which ſhall teſtify againſt his crimes. He will have nothing to reply, continues this father. You knew the truth it will be ſaid to him, and you iniquitouſly withheld it; you admitted of the happineſs of the ſouls who ſeek only God, and you ſought him not yourſelves: you drew ſhocking pictures of the world, of its wearineſſes, of its perfidies, and of its wickedneſſes, and you were always its ſlave and blinded worſhipper; you inwardly reſpected the religion of your fathers, and you made a deplorable vaunt of impiety: you ſecretly dreaded the judgments of God, and you affected not to believe in him. In the bottom of your

heart

heart you rendered juſtice to the piety of the godly: you propoſed to reſemble them at ſome future period; and you tore and perſecuted them with your deriſions and cenſures: in a word, your lights have ever been for God, and your actions for the world.

O my God! to what do men not carry their ingratitude and folly! Thou haſt placed in us lights inſeparable from our being, which, by diſturbing the falſe peace of our paſſions and errors, continually recal us to order and to the truth; and, through an impoſition of vanity, we make a boaſt of being tranquil in our errors; we glory in a peace which thy mercy is ſtill willing to diſturb; and far from publiſhing the riches of thy grace upon our ſoul, which leaves us ſtill open to the truth, we vaunt an obſtinacy and a blindneſs which ſooner or later ſhall be realiſed, and ſhall, at laſt, be the juſt puniſhment of an ingratitude and of a deceit ſo injurious to thy grace. Firſt character of the evidence of the law of God; it is evident in the conſcience of the ſinner; but it is likewiſe ſo in the ſimplicity of its rules.

PART II. Since man is the work of God, man can no longer live but conformably to the will of his author; and ſince God hath of man made his work, and his moſt perfect work, he could never leave him to live by chance upon the earth without manifeſting to him his will, that is to ſay, without pointing out to him what he owed to his Creator, to his fellow-creatures, and to himſelf. Therefore, in creating him, he imprinted in his being a living light, inceſſantly viſible to his heart, which regulated all his duties. But all fleſh having perverted its way, and the abundance of iniquity, which had prevailed over the earth, (unable, it is true, to efface that light entirely from the

the heart of men,) no longer permitting them to reflect, or to conſult it, and apparently no longer even maintaining itſelf in them, unleſs to render them more inexcuſeable; God, whoſe mercies ſeem to become more abundant in proportion as the wickedneſs of men increaſes, cauſed to be engraven, on tables of ſtone, that law which nature, that is to ſay, which himſelf had engraven on our hearts: he placed before our eyes the law which we bear within us, in order to recal us to ourſelves. Nevertheleſs, the people, who were its firſt depoſitaries, having again disfigured it by interpretations which adulterated its purity, Jeſus Chriſt, the wiſdom and the light of God, came at laſt upon the earth to reſtore to it its original beauty; to purge it from the alterations of the ſynagogue; to diſſipate the obſcurities which a falſe learning and human traditions had ſpread through it; to lay open all its ſublimity; to apply its rules to our wants; and, in leaving to us his goſpel, no longer to leave an excuſe, either to the ignorance or to the wickedneſs of thoſe who violate his precepts.

Nevertheleſs, the ſecond pretext which is oppoſed in the world to the evidence of the law of God, is the pretended ambiguity of its rules: they accuſe us of making the goſpel to ſay whatever we wiſh; they conteſt, they find anſwers, they ſpread obſcurities through all; and they darken the law in ſuch a manner, that the world itſelf inſiſts on having the goſpel on its ſide.

Now, I ſay that, beſides the evidence of the conſcience, the law of God is alſo evident in the ſimplicity of its rules; and, conſequently, that the ſinners, who wiſh thus to juſtify their iniquitous ways, ſhall one day be overthrown, both by the teſtimony of their own heart, and by the evidence of the holy rules.

Yes,

Yes, my brethren, the law of God, ſays the prophet, is pure, enlightening the eyes even of thoſe who would wiſh to conceal it from themſelves. In effect, Jeſus Chriſt, in coming himſelf to give to us a law of life and of truth for the regulation of our manners and our duties, and in which the evidence could not be too great, could never undoubtedly have meant to leave obſcurities in it capable of deluding us and of favouring paſſions which he expreſsly came to overthrow. Human laws may be liable to theſe inconveniences: the mind of man, which hath invented them, being unable to foreſee all, it hath alſo been unable to obviate all the difficulties which might one day ariſe in the minds of other men, on the ſtrength of its expreſſions, and even on the nature of its rules. But the ſpirit of God, author of the holy rules held out in the goſpel, had foreſeen all the doubts which the human mind could oppoſe to his law: he hath read, in the hearts of all men to come, the obſcurities which their corruption might ſhed over the nature of its rules: conſequently, he hath concerted them in a manner ſo divine and ſo intelligible, ſo ſimple and ſo ſublime, that the moſt ignorant, equally as the moſt learned, can never miſconſtrue his intentions, and be ignorant of the ways of eternal life.

It is true, that ſacred obſcurities conceal in it the incomprehenſible myſteries of faith; but the rules of the manners are explicit and preciſe; the duties are there evident; and nothing can be more clear, or leſs equivocal, than the precepts of Jeſus Chriſt. Not but that doubts and difficulties may ſpring up in the detail of the obligations; that the aſſemblage of a thouſand different circumſtances may not, in ſuch a manner, darken the rule, that it may ſometimes eſcape the moſt learned; and that, upon all the inti-

nite duties of ſtations and conditions, all be ſo decided in the goſpel, that miſtakes cannot often take place.

But I ſay, (and I intreat of you to purſue theſe reflections which to me appear of the utmoſt conſequence, and to compriſe all the rules of the manners,) in the firſt place, that if, upon the detail of duties, the letter of the law be ſometimes dubious, the ſpirit of it is almoſt never ſo: that it is eaſily ſeen to which ſide the goſpel inclines, and to what the analogy and ruling ſpirit of its maxims lead us: I ſay, that they mutually clear up each other; that they all go to the ſame end; that they are like ſo many rays, which, uniting in one centre, form ſo grand a luſtre that it is impoſſible longer to miſtake them; that there are principal rules which ſerve to elucidate every particular difficulty; and, laſtly, that, if the law appear ſometimes equivocal to us, the intention of the legiſlator, by which we ought to interpret it, never leaves room for either doubt or miſtake.

Thus, you would wiſh to know, you who live at the court, where ambition is, as it were, the virtue of perſons of your rank; you would wiſh to know if it be a crime ardently to long for the honours and the proſperities of the earth, to be never ſatisfied with your ſtation, continually to wiſh advancement, and to connect, with that ſingle deſire, all your views, all your proceedings, all your cares, the whole foundation of your life. In anſwer to this, you are there told, that your heart ought to be where your treaſure is; that is to ſay, in the deſire and the hope of eternal riches; and that the Chriſtian is not of this world. Decide thereupon the difficulty yourſelves.

You

You demand if continual gaming, amuſements, theatres, and ſo many other pleaſures, ſo innocent in the eyes of the world, ought to be baniſhed from the Chriſtian life. You are there told, that bleſſed are they who weep; and that evil to thoſe who laugh, and who receive their conſolation in this world. Follow the ſpirit of this rule, and ſee to what it leads.

You enquire if, having to live in the world, you ought to live like the world; if we would wiſh to condemn almoſt all men who live like you; and if, in order to ſerve God, it be neceſſary to affect ſingularities which excite the ridicule of other men. You are there told, that we are not to conform to this corrupted age; that it is impoſſible to pleaſe men and to be the ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt; and that the multitude is always the party of the reprobate. You have now to ſay whether the anſwer be explicit.

You doubt, if, having pardoned your enemy, you be alſo obliged to ſee him, to ſerve him, to aſſiſt him with your wealth and credit; and if it be not more equitable to reſerve your favours and preferences for your friends. You are there told: do good to thoſe who have wiſhed evil to you: ſpeak well of thoſe who calumniate you; love thoſe who hate you. Enter into the ſpirit of this precept, and ſay if it doth not ſhed a light over your doubt, which inſtantly clears it up and diſſipates it.

Laſtly, propoſe as many doubts as you pleaſe upon duties, and it will be eaſy for you to decide them by the ſpirit of the law, if the letter ſay nothing for them; for the letter kills me, ſays the apoſtle: that is to ſay, to ſtop there, to look upon as duty only what is literally marked, to ſtop at the rude limits, and to enter no farther into the principle and

into

into the ſpirit which vivifies, is ſo be a Jew, and to be willing to be ſelf-deceived. No longer tell us then, my brethren, when we condemn ſo many abuſes which you, without ſcruple, allow yourſelves: "But the goſpel ſays "nothing of them." Ah! the goſpel ſays every thing to thoſe who wiſh to underſtand it: the goſpel leaves nothing undecided to whoever loves the law of God: the goſpel is competent to all, to whoever ſearches it, only for the inſtruction: and it goes ſo much the farther, and ſays ſo much the more, as that, without ſtopping to regulate a particular detail, it regulates the paſſions themſelves; that, without detailing all the actions, it goes to repreſs thoſe inclinations which are the ſources of them; and that, without confining itſelf to certain external circumſtances of the manners, it propoſes to us, as rules of duty, only ſelf-denial, hatred of the world, love of ſufferance, contempt for whatever takes place, and the whole extent of its crucifying maxims: firſt reflection.

I ſay, in the ſecond place, that it is not the obſcurity of the law, but our paſſions, ſtill dear, which give riſe to all our doubts upon the duties; that the worldly ſouls are thoſe who find moſt difficulty and moſt obſcurity in the rules of the manners; that nothing appears clear to thoſe who would wiſh that nothing were ſo; that every thing appears doubtful to thoſe who have an intereſt in its being ſo: I ſay, with St. Auguſtin, that it is a willing ſpirit alone which gives underſtanding of the precepts; that, unleſs the rules and duties are loved, they can never be thoroughly known; that we enter into the truth only through charity; and that the ſincere deſire of ſalvation is the grand ſolver of all difficulties: I ſay that faithful and fervent ſouls have almoſt never any thing to oppoſe to the law of God; and that their doubts are rather pious alarms upon holy

actions,

actions, than pretexts and difficulties to authoriſe profane ones.

Men have learned to doubt upon the rules of the manners, only ſince they have wiſhed to connect them with their iniquitous paſſions. Alas! all was almoſt decided for the firſt believers: in theſe happy ages, we ſee not that the firſt paſtors of the church had many difficulties to reſolve upon the detail of the duties: thoſe immenſe volumes, which decide their doubts by endleſs reſolutions, have appeared only with the corruption of manners: in proportion as believers have had more paſſions to ſatisfy, they have had more doubts to propoſe; it hath been neceſſary to multiply volumes upon volumes, in order to reſolve difficulties which cupidity alone formed; difficulties already all reſolved in the goſpel, and upon which the firſt ages of faith would have been ſcandaliſed, that they had dared to form even a doubt. Our ages ſtill more diſſolute than moſt which preceded us, have ſtill beheld theſe enormous collections of caſes and reſolutions increaſing and multiplying to infinity: all the moſt inconteſtible rules of the morality of Jeſus Chriſt are there become almoſt problems; there is no duty upon which corruption hath not had difficulties to propoſe, and to which a falſe learning hath not found mollifications: every thing has there been agitated, conteſted, and put in doubt: the mind of man hath there been ſeen quibbling with the ſpirit of God, and ſubſtituting human doctrines in place of that doctrine which Jeſus Chriſt hath brought to us from heaven; and although we pretend not univerſally to blame all thoſe pious and able men, who have left to us theſe laborious maſſes of deciſions, it had been to be wiſhed that the church had never called in ſuch aids; and we cannot help looking upon them as remedies which are themſelves become

come diſeaſes, and as the ſad fruits of the neceſſity of the times, of the depravity of manners, and of the decay of truth among men.

Doubts upon the duties ariſe, therefore from the corruption of our hearts, much more than from the obſcurities of the rules. The light of the law, ſays St. Auguſtin, reſembles that of the ſun; but vainly doth it ſhine, glitter, enlighten; the blind are unaffected by it: now, every ſinner is that blind perſon; the light is near to him, ſurrounds him, penetrates him, enters from every quarter into his ſoul; but he is always himſelf far from the light. Purify your heart, continues that holy father; remove from it the fatal bandage of the paſſions; then ſhall you clearly ſee all your duties, and all your doubts ſhall vaniſh. Thus we continually ſee that, when touched with grace, a ſoul begins to adopt ſolid meaſures for eternity, his eyes are opened upon a thouſand truths which, till then, he had conceal-ed from himſelf: in proportion as his paſſions diminiſh, his lights increaſe; he is aſtoniſhed by what means he could ſo long have ſhut his eyes upon truths which now appear to him ſo evident and ſo inconteſtible; and, far from a ſacred guide having then occaſion to conteſt, and to maintain againſt him the intereſts of the law of God, his prudence is required to conceal, as I may ſay, from that contrite ſoul, the whole extent and all the terrors of the holy truths; to quiet him on the horror of paſt irregularities, and to moderate the fears into which he is thrown by the novelty and the ſurpriſe of his lights. It is not then the rules which are cleared up, it is the ſoul which frees itſelf from, and quits its blindneſs; it is not the law of God which becomes more evident, it is the eyes of the heart which are opened to its luſtre; in a word, it is not the goſpel, but the ſinner who is changed.

And

And a freſh proof of what I advance is, that, upon thoſe points of the law where no particular paſſion or intereſt blinds us, we are equitable and clear-ſighted. A miſer, who hides from himſelf the rules of faith, upon the inſatiable love of riches, clearly ſees the maxims which condemn ambition or luxury. A voluptuary, who tries to juſtify to himſelf the weakneſs of his inclinations, gives no quarter to the mean deſires, and to the ſordid attachments of avarice. A man, mad for exaltation and fortune, and who conſiders the eternal exertions which he is under the neceſſity of making, in order to ſucceed, as weighty and ſerious cares, and alone worthy his birth and his name, ſees all the unworthineſs of a life of amuſement and pleaſure, and clearly comprehends that a man, born with a name, degrades and diſhonours himſelf by lazineſs and indolence. A woman, ſeized with the rage of gaming, yet otherwiſe regular, is inveterate againſt the ſlighteſt faults which attack the conduct, and continually juſtifies the innocence of exceſſive gaming, by contraſting it with irregularities of another deſcription, from which ſhe finds herſelf free. Another, on the contrary, intoxicated with her perſon and with her beauty, totally engroſſed by her deplorable paſſions, conſiders that obſtinate perſeverance in an eternal gaming as a kind of diſeaſe and derangement of the mind, and, in the ſhame of her own engagements, ſees nothing but an innocent weakneſs and involuntary inclinations, the deſtiny of which we find in our hearts.

Review all the paſſions, and you will ſee that, in proportion as we are exempted from ſome one, we ſee, we condemn it in others; we know the rules which forbid it; we go even to the rigour againſt others, upon the obſervance of duties which intereſt not our own weakneſſes, and we carry our ſeverity beyond even the rule itſelf.

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The Phariſees, ſo inſtructed in, and ſo ſevere upon the guilt of the adultreſs, and upon the puniſhments attached by the law to the infamy of that infidelity, ſaw not their own pride, their hypocriſy, their implacable hatred, and their ſecret envy againſt Jeſus Chriſt. Obſcurities are only in our own heart; and we never begin to doubt upon our duties, but when we begin to love thoſe maxims which oppoſe them. Second reflection.

In effect, I tell you, in the third place, you believe that the goſpel is not ſo expreſs as we pretend, upon the greater part of the rules which we wiſh to preſcribe to you; that we carry its ſeverity to exceſs, and that we make it to ſay whatever we pleaſe. Hear it then itſelf, my brethren; we conſent that, of all the duties preſcribed to you by it, you ſhall think yourſelves obliged to obſerve only thoſe which are marked there in terms ſo preciſe and clear that it is impoſſible to miſtake or miſconſtrue them: more is not required of you, and we free you from all the reſt. Hear it then: "And whoſoever "doth not bear his croſs, and come after me, cannot be "my diſciple. Whoſoever he be of you, that forſaketh "not all that he hath, he cannot be my diſciple. The "kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent "take it by force. Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh. Ye cannot ſerve God and mammon. Wo "unto you that are full: for ye ſhall hunger. Wo unto "you that laugh now; for ye ſhall mourn and weep. "Bleſſed are they that weep now; for ye ſhall laugh. "He that loveth his father, his wife, his children, yea, "and his life alſo, better than me, is not worthy of me. "I ſay unto you that ye ſhall weep and lament, but the "world ſhall rejoice; and ye ſhall be ſorrowful, but your "ſorrow ſhall be turned into joy."

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Do I ſpeak here my brethren? Do I come to deceive you by an exceſs of ſeverity, to add to the goſpel, and to bring you only my own thoughts? Weak creature that I am, I have occaſion myſelf for indulgence; and if I took in the weakneſs of my own heart, the doctrine which I announce to you, alas! I would ſpeak to you only the language of man: I would tell you that God is too good to puniſh inclinations which are born, it would appear with us; that, to love God, it is not neceſſary to hate one's ſelf: that, when rich, we ought to enjoy our wealth, and allow ourſelves every gratification. Behold the language which I would hold; for man, delivered up to himſelf, can ſpeak only this language of fleſh and blood. But would you believe me, as I have already demanded; would you reſpect my miniſtry; would you look upon me as an angel from heaven, who ſhould come to announce to you this new goſpel?

That of Jeſus Chriſt ſpeaks another language to you; I have related to you only his own divine words; theſe are the duties which he preſcribes to you in clear and expreſs terms. We conſent that you confine your whole piety to theſe limits, and that you leave all the reſt as doubtful, or, at leaſt, commanded in terms leſs clear, and more ſuſceptible of favourable interpretations. Reckon not among your duties, but theſe holy and inconteſtible rules; we exact nothing more; limit yourſelves to performing what they preſcribe to you; and you will ſee that you ſhall do more than we even demand of you; and that the moſt common and moſt familiar maxims of the goſpel go infinitely farther than all our diſcourſes. Third reflection.

I alſo ſay to you, in the fourth place, that, if almoſt all be conteſted in the world, upon the moſt inconteſtible du-

ties of Chriſtian piety, it is becauſe the goſpel is a book unknown to the greateſt part of believers; it is that, through a deplorable abuſe, a whole life is paſſed in acquiring vain learning, equally uſeleſs to man, to his happineſs, and to his eternity; and the book of the law is never read, in which is contained the knowledge of ſalvation, the truth which is to deliver us, the light which is to conduct us, the titles of our hopes, the teſtimony of our immortality, the conſolations of our exilement, and the aids of our pilgrimage: it is that, on entering into the world, care is taken to preſent to us thoſe books, in which are explained the rules of that profeſſion to which we are allotted; and that the book of the law, in which the rules of the profeſſion of the Chriſtian are contained, that profeſſion which ſhall ſurvive all others, alone neceſſary, and the only one which ſhall accompany us into eternity; that book, I ſay, is left in neglect, and enters not into the plan of ſtudies which ought to occupy our earlier years; laſtly, it is that fabulous and laſcivious hiſtories childiſhly amuſe our leiſure; and that the hiſtory of God's wonders and mercies upon men, filled with events ſo grand, ſo weighty, ſo intereſting, which ought to be the ſole occupation, and the whole conſolation of our life, does not appear to us worthy even of our curioſity.

I am not ſurpriſed, after this, if we have continual occaſion to maintain the goſpel againſt the abuſes and the prejudices of the world; if we are liſtened to with the ſame ſurpriſe, when we announce the commoneſt truths of the Chriſtian morality, as though we announced the belief and the myſteries of thoſe ſavage and far diſtant nations, whoſe countries and manners are hardly known; and if the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt find the ſame oppoſition at preſent in minds that it experienced at the birth of faith, it is, that

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there are Chriſtians to whom the book of the goſpel is almoſt equally unknown as it then was to the heathens; who ſcarcely know whether Jeſus Chriſt be come to bring laws to men, and who cannot, for a ſingle moment, ſupport, without wearineſs, the reading of that divine book, the rules of which are ſo ſublime, the promiſes ſo conſoling, and of which the pagans themſelves, who embraced faith, ſo much admired the beauty and the divine philoſophy. Thus, my brethren, read the holy books, and read them with that ſpirit of faith, of ſubmiſſion, of truſt, which the church exacts, and you will ſoon be as well acquainted with your duties, and with the rules of the manners, as the doctors themſelves who teach you.

And indeed, my brethren, whence comes it, I beg of you, that the firſt believers carried ſo far the purity of manners, and the holineſs of Chriſtianity? Were other maxims announced to them than thoſe which we announce to you? Was another goſpel preached to them, more clear and more explicit than that which we preach to you? Nevertheleſs, they were idolatrous and diſſolute nations, who had brought, to the truths of faith, all the prejudices of the ſuperſtitions, and of the moſt infamous voluptuouſneſſes authoriſed even by their worſhip. Did the goſpel contain the ſmalleſt obſcurities favourable to the paſſions, it ſurely ought to have been thoſe firſt diſciples of faith who ſhould have made the miſtake. Nevertheleſs, whence comes it that they never propoſed to the apoſtles and to their ſucceſſors, the ſame difficulties which you continually oppoſe to us, in ſupport of the abuſes of the world, and of the intereſts of the paſſions? Whence comes it, that, with more inclinations and more prejudices than we for pleaſures, thoſe bleſſed believers at once comprehend how far, in order to obey the goſpel, it was neceſſary to deny them to themſelves? Ah!

Ah! it was that, night and day, they had the book of the law in their hands: it was that patience, and the conſolation of the ſcriptures, were the ſweeteſt occupation of their faith; it was that the letters of the holy apoſtles, and the relation of the life and of the maxims of Jeſus Chriſt, were the ſole bond, and the daily converſations of theſe infant churches; in a word, it is that, to whoever reads the goſpel, whatever regards the duties is quickly decided. Fourth reflection.

Laſtly, I ſay, even admitting that ſome obſcurities ſhould be found there, doth not the law of God find all its evidence in inſtruction and in the miniſtry? The Chriſtian pulpits announce to you the purity of the holy maxims; the paſtors publicly preach them; men, full of zeal and of knowledge, convey them down to poſterity, in works worthy of the better times of the church; never had the piety of believers more aids; no age ever was more enlightened, or better knew the ſpirit of faith and the whole extent of duties. We no longer live in thoſe ages of ignorance in which the rules ſubſiſted only in the abuſes which had adulterated them; in which the miniſtry was often an occaſion of error and of ſcandal for believers; and in which the prieſt was conſidered as more enlightened, whenever he was more ſuperſtitious than his people.

It would ſeem, O my God! that, in order to render us more inexcuſable, in proportion as the wickedneſs of men increaſes on the one ſide, the knowledge of the truth, which is to condemn them, augments on the other; in proportion as the manners become corrupted, the rules become more evident; in proportion as faith becomes languid, it is cleared up and purified; like thoſe fires which, in expiring, give a momentary flaſh, and never diſplay their luſtre

ſtre with ſuch brilliancy as when on the eve of being extinguiſhed.

Not that there are not ſtill among us many blind guides and prophets who announce their own dreams. But the ſnare is to be dreaded only by thoſe who are willing to be deceived: when ſincerely inclined to ſeek the Lord, we ſoon find the hand which knows to lead us to him: it is not then, properly ſpeaking, the falſe guides who lead us aſtray, it is ourſelves who ſeek them, becauſe we wiſh to err with them; they are not the firſt authors of our ruin, they are only the encouragers of it; they do not lead us into the path of perdition, they only leave us there; and we are already determined to periſh before we apply for their ſuffrage. In effect, we ſenſibly feel ourſelves the danger and the imprudence of the choice we make; even the more we find the oracle complying, the more we miſtruſt his lights; the more he reſpects our paſſions, the leſs we reſpect his miniſtry; he is frequently made the ſubject even of our deriſions; we turn into ridicule that very indulgence which we have ſought; we vaunt the having found a protector ſo convenient for the human weakneſſes; and, through a blindneſs which cannot be mentioned without tears, the ſoul and eternal ſalvation are confided to a man who is believed unworthy, not only of reſpect, but even of attention and decency; like thoſe Iſraelites who, a moment after having bowed the knee to the golden calf, and expected from it their ſalvation and their deliverance, broke it in pieces with diſgrace, and reduced it to aſhes.

But, after all, when the ignorance or the weakening of miniſters ſhould even be an occaſion of error, the examples of the holy undeceive you. You ſee what, from the beginning, hath been the path of thoſe who have obtained

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the promiſes, and whoſe memory and holy toils we ſtill honour upon the earth: you ſee that none of them hath accompliſhed his ſalvation by that way which the world vaunts as being ſo ſafe and ſo innocent: you ſee that all the holy have repented, crucified their fleſh, deſpiſed the world with all its pleaſures and maxims: you ſee that thoſe ages, ſo oppoſite to each other for their manners and cuſtoms, have never made any change in the manners of the juſt; that the holy of the firſt times were the ſame as thoſe of the laſt; that the countries, even the moſt diſſimilar for their diſpoſition and behaviour, have produced holy, all reſembling each other; that thoſe of the moſt diſtant climates, and the moſt different from our own, reſemble thoſe of our nation; that, in every tongue and in every tribe, they have all been the ſame; laſtly, that their ſituations have been different; that ſome have wrought out their ſalvation in obſcurity, others in elevation; ſome in poverty, others in abundance; ſome in the diſſipation of dignities and of public cares, others in ſilence and the calm of ſolitude: in a word, ſome in the cottage, others on the throne; but that the croſs, violence, and ſelf-denial hath been the common path of all.

What then art thou, to pretend to reach heaven by other ways; and thou flattereſt thyſelf that, in that crowd of illuſtrious ſervants of the living God, thou alone ſhalt be priviledged? My God! with what luſtre haſt thou not ſurrounded the truth in order to render man inexcuſable! His conſcience ſhews it to him; thy holy law guards it for him; the voice of the church makes it to reſound in his ears; the example of thy holy inceſſantly places it before his eyes; every thing riſes up againſt guilt; all take the intereſts of thy holy law againſt his falſe peace; from every quarter proceed rays of light which go to bear the truth even to the bottom of his

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ſoul; no place, no ſituation, can protect him from thoſe divine ſparks emitted from thy boſom, which every where purſue him, and which, in enlightening, rack him: the truth, which ought to deliver him, renders him unhappy; and unwilling to love its light, he is forced, before hand, to feel its juſt ſeverity.

What then, my dear hearer, prevents the truth from triumphing in your heart? Wherefore do you change, into an inexhauſtible ſource of cruel remorſes, lights which ought to be, within you, the whole conſolation of your ſorrows? Since, by a conſequnce of the riches of God's mercy upon your ſoul, you cannot ſucceed, like ſo many impious and hardened hearts, to ſtifle that internal monitor which inceſſantly recalls you to order and duty, why will you obſtinately withſtand the happineſs of your lot? Why ſo many efforts to defend you from yourſelf? So many ſtarts and ſlights to ſhun yourſelf? At laſt, reconcile your hearts with your lights, your conſcience with your manners, yourſelf with the law of God; behold the only ſecret of attaining to that peace of heart which you ſeek. Turn yourſelf on every ſide, you muſt always come to that. Obſervance of the law is the true happineſs of man: it is deceiving himſelf to look upon it as a yoke: it alone places the heart at liberty. Whatever favours our paſſions, ſharpens our ills, increaſes our troubles, multiplies our bonds, and aggravates our ſlavery; the law of God alone, in repreſſing them, places us in order, quiets, cures, and delivers us. Such is the deſtiny of ſinful man, to be incapable of happineſs here below, but by overcoming his paſſions; to attain by violence alone to the true pleaſures of the heart, and afterwards to that eternal peace prepared for thoſe who ſhall have loved the law of the Lord.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

IMMUTABILITY OF THE LAW OF GOD.

JOHN viii. 46.

And if I ſay the truth, why do ye not believe me?

IT is not enough to have defended the evidence of the law of God againſt the affected ignorance of the ſinners who violate it; it is neceſſary likewiſe to eſtabliſh its immutability againſt all the pretexts which ſeem to authoriſe the world to diſpenſe itſelf from its holy rules.

Jeſus Chriſt is not ſatisfied with announcing to the Phariſees that the truth which they know ſhall one day judge them; that in vain they concealed it from themſelves; and that the guilt of the truth, known and contemned, would be for ever upon their head. It is through the evidence of the law that he at firſt recalls them to their own conſcience; he afterwards accuſes them of having ſtruck even at its immutability; of ſubſtituting human cuſtoms and traditions in place of the perpetuity of its rules; of accommodating them to times, to circumſtances, and to intereſts; and declares to them that, even to the end of ages, a ſingle jot ſhall not be changed in his law; that heaven and the earth ſhall paſs away, but that his law and his holy word ſhall for ever be the ſame.

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And behold, my brethren, the abuſes which ſtill reign among us againſt the law of God. We have ſhewn to you that, in ſpite of the doubts and the obſcurities which our luſts have ſpread over our duties, the light of the law, always ſuperior to our paſſions, diſſipate, in ſpite of ourſelves, theſe obſcurities, and that we were never hearty in the tranſgreſſions which we tried to juſtify to ourſelves. But it is little to be willing, like the Phariſees, to darken the evidence of the law; like them, we likewiſe ſtrike at its immutability; and, as if the law of God could change with the manners of the age, the differences of conditions, the neceſſity of ſituations, we believe that we can accommodate it to theſe three different circumſtances, and in them find pretexts, either to mollify its ſeverity, or altogether to violate its precepts.

1ſtly, In effect, the heart of man is changeable; every age ſees new cuſtoms ſpring up among us; times and the cuſtoms always determine our manners: now, the law of God is immutable in its duration, always the ſame in all times and in all places; and, by this firſt character of immutability, it alone ought to be the conſtant and perpetual rule of our manners: firſt reflection.

2dly, The heart of man is vain; whatever levels us with the reſt of men, wounds our pride; we love diſtinctions and preferences; we believe that, in the elevation of rank and of birth, we find privileges againſt the law: now, the law of God is immutable in its extent; it levels all ſtations and all conditions; it is the ſame for the great and for the people, for the prince and for the ſubject; and, by this ſecond character of immutability, it ought to recal to the ſame duties the variety of ſtations and conditions which

ſpreads ſo much inequality over the detail of manners and of the rules: ſecond reflection.

Laſtly, The heart of man connects every thing with itſelf; he perſuades himſelf that his intereſts ought to be preferred to the law and to the intereſts of God himſelf; the ſlighteſt inconveniencies are reaſons, in his eyes, againſt the rule: now, the law of God is immutable in all ſituations of life; and, by this laſt character of immutability, there is neither perplexity, nor inconveniency, nor apparent neceſſity, which can diſpenſe us from its precepts: laſt reflection.

And behold the three pretexts, which the world oppoſes to the immutability of the law of God, overthrown: the pretext of manners and cuſtoms; the pretext of rank and of birth; the pretext of ſituations and inconveniencies. The law of God is immutable in its duration; therefore, the manners and the cuſtoms can never change it: the law of God is immutable in its extent; therefore, the difference of ranks and of conditions leaves it every where the ſame: the law of God is immutable in all ſituations; therefore, inconveniencies, perplexities, never juſtify the ſmalleſt tranſgreſſion of it.

PART I. One of the moſt urgent and moſt uſual reproaches which the firſt ſupporters of religion formerly made to the heathens, was the inſtability of their moral ſyſtem, and the continual fluctuations of their doctrine. As the fulneſs of truth was not in vain philoſophy, and as they drew not their lights, ſaid Turtullian, from that ſovereign reaſon which enlightens all minds, and which is the immutable teacher of the truth; but from the corruption of their heart, and the vanity of their thoughts; they qualified

fied good and evil according to their caprices, and, among them, vice and virtue were almoſt arbitrary names. Nevertheleſs, continues this father, the moſt inſeparable character of truth, is that of being always the ſame: good and evil take their immutability from that of God himſelf, whom they glorify or inſult; his wiſdom, his holineſs, his righteouſneſs, are the only eternal rules of our manners; and it belongs not to men, at their pleaſure, to change what men have not eſtabliſhed, and what is more ancient than men themſelves.

Now it was not ſurpriſing that morality had nothing determinate, in the heathen ſchools, delivered up to the pride, and to the variations of the human mind; it was vanity and not the truth, which made philoſophers; the rules changed with the ages; new times brought new laws: in a word, the tenets did not change the manners; it was the change of manners which drew after it that of the tenets.

But, what is aſtoniſhing, is, that Chriſtians, who have received from heaven the eternal and immutable law which regulates their manners, believe it to be equally changeable as the morality of philoſophers; that they perſuade themſelves that the rigorous duties, which the goſpel at firſt preſcribed to the primitive ages of the church, are mollified with the relaxation of manners, and are no longer made for the weakneſs and the corruption of our ages.

In effect, the goſpel, the law of Jeſus Chriſt, is immutable in its duration: ſeeing every thing change around it, it alone changes not; the duties which it preſcribes to us, founded upon the wants and upon the nature of man, are, like it, of all times and of all places. Every thing changes upon the earth, becauſe every thing partakes of the mutabili-

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ty of its origin; empires and ſtates have their riſe and their fall; arts and ſciences fall or ſpring up with the ages; cuſtoms continually change with the taſte of the people, and with climates; from on high; in his immutability, God ſeems to ſport with human affairs, by leaving them in an eternal revolution: the ages to come will deſtroy what we, with ſo much anxiety, rear up; we deſtroy what our fathers had thought worthy of an eternal duration; and, in order to teach us in what eſtimation we ought to hold things here below, God permitteth that they have nothing determinate, or ſolid, but that very inconſiſtency which inceſſantly agitates them.

But, amid all the changes of manners and ages, the law of God remains always the immutable rule of ages and of manners. Heaven and the earth ſhall paſs away; but the holy words of the law ſhall never paſs away: ſuch as the firſt believers received them at the birth of faith, ſuch have we them at preſent, ſuch ſhall our deſcendants one day receive them; laſtly, ſuch ſhall the bleſſed in heaven eternally love and adore them. The fervour of the licentiouſneſs of ages add or diminiſh nothing to their indulgence, or from their ſeverity; the zeal or the complaiſance of men, renders them neither more auſtere, nor more accommodating. The intolerant rigour, or the exceſſive relaxation of opinions and tenets, leaves them all the wiſe ſobriety of their rules; and they form that eternal goſpel which the angel, in theRevelation, announces from on high in heaven, from the beginning, to every tongue and to every nation.

Nevertheleſs, my brethren, when, in the manners of the primitive believers, we ſometimes repreſent to you all the duties of the goſpel exactly fulfilled, their freedom from

from the world, their abſence from theatres and public pleaſures, their aſſiduity in the temples, the modeſty and the decency of their dreſs, their charity for their brethren, their indifference for all periſhable things, their continual deſire of going to be reunited to Jeſus Chriſt; in a word, that ſimple, retired, and mortified life, ſuſtained by fervent prayer, and by the conſolation of the holy books, and ſuch, in effect, as the goſpel preſcribes to all the diſciples of faith; when we bring forward to you, I ſay, theſe ancient models, in order to make you feel, by the difference betwixt the primitive manners and yours, how diſtant you are from the kingdom of God; far from being alarmed at finding yourſelves diſſimilar to ſuch a degree, that hardly could it be believed that you were diſciples of the ſame Maſter, and followers of the ſame law; you reproach us with continually recalling, even to wearineſs, theſe primitive times, of never ſpeaking but of the primitive church, as if it were poſſible to regulate our manners, upon manners of which every trace hath long been done away, impracticable at preſent among us, and which the times and cuſtoms have univerſally aboliſhed. You ſay, that men muſt be taken as they are; that it were to be wiſhed that the primitive fervour had been kept up in the church; but that every thing becomes relaxed and weakened through time, and that, to pretend to bring us back to the life of the primitive ages, is not holding out means of ſalvation, but is merely preaching up that nobody can now pretend to it.

But I demand of you, in the firſt place, my brethren, if the times and the years, which have ſo much adulterated the purity of Chriſtianity, have adulterated that of the goſpel? Are the rules become more pliable and more favourable to the paſſions, becauſe men are become more ſenſual and

and more voluptuous? And hath the relaxation of manners ſoftened the maxims of Jeſus Chriſt? When he hath foretold in the goſpel, that, in the latter times, that is to ſay, in the ages in which we have the misfortune to live, faith ſhould almoſt no longer be found upon the earth, that his name ſhould hardly be known there, that his maxims ſhould be deſtroyed, that the duties ſhould be incompatible with the cuſtoms, and that the juſt themſelves ſhould allow themſelves to be almoſt infected by the univerſal contagion, and to be dragged away by the torrent of example: hath he then added, that in order to accommodate himſelf to the corruption of theſe latter times, he would relax ſomething of the ſeverity of his goſpel; that he would conſent that cuſtoms, eſtabliſhed by the ignorance and the licentiouſneſs of the ages, ſhould ſucceed to the rules and to the duties of his doctrine; that he would then exact of his diſciples infinitely leſs than he exacted at the birth of faith; and that his kingdom, which, at firſt, was promiſed only to force, ſhould then be granted to indolence and lazineſs? Hath he added this, I demand of you? On the contrary, he warns his diſciples that then, in theſe latter times, it will, more than ever, be neceſſary to pray, to faſt, to retire to the mountains, in order to ſhun the general corruption: he warns them that wo unto thoſe who ſhall then remain expoſed amid the world; that thoſe alone ſhall be ſafe who ſhall diveſt themſelves of all and who ſhall fly from amid the cities; and he concludes, by exhorting them once more to watch and to pray without ceaſing, in order not to be included in the general condemnation.

And, in effect, my brethren, the more diſorders augment, the more ought piety to be fervent and watchful; the more we are ſurrounded with dangers, the more doth prayer, retreat, mortification, become neceſſary to us. The licentiouſneſs

tiouſneſs of the preſent manners adds ſtill new obligations to thoſe of our fathers; and, far from the path of ſalvation having become more eaſy than in thoſe former times, we ſhall periſh with a moderate virtue, which, ſupported them by the common example, would perhaps have been ſufficient to ſecure our ſalvation.

Beſides, my brethren, I demand of you in the ſecond place, do you really believe that the rigorous precepts of the goſpel, thoſe maxims of the croſs, of violence, of ſelf-denial, of contempt for the world, have been made only for the primitive ages of faith? Do you believe that Jeſus Chriſt hath deſtined all the rigours of his doctrine for thoſe chaſte, innocent, charitable, and fervent men, who lived in theſe happy times of the church; thoſe men who denied themſelves every pleaſure, thoſe primitive heroes of religion, who, almoſt all, perſerved, even to the end, the grace of regeneration which had made them Chriſtians? What, my brethren, Jeſus Chriſt would have rewarded their zeal and their fidelity only by aggravating their yoke, and he would have reſerved all his indulgence for the corrupted men of our ages? Jeſus Chriſt would have made ſtrict laws of reſerve, of modeſty, of retirement, only for thoſe primitive Chriſtian women who renounced all to pleaſe him; who divided themſelves only with the Lord and their huſbands; who, ſhut up in the incloſure of their houſes, brought up their children in faith and in piety? And he would exact leſs at preſent of thoſe ſenſual, voluptuous, and worldly women, who continually wound our eyes by the indecency of their dreſs, and who corrupt the heart by the looſeneſs of their manners, and by the ſnares which they lay for innocence? And where would here be that ſo much vaunted equity and wiſdom of the Chriſtian morality? More ſhould then be exacted of him who owes

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leſs? The tranſgreſſions of the law ſhould then diſpenſe from its ſeverity thoſe who violate it? It would ſuffice to have paſſions, to be entitled to gratify them? The way of heaven would be rendered eaſy to ſinners, while all its roughneſs would be kept for the juſt? And the more vices men ſhould have, the leſs ſhould they have occaſion for virtues?

Again allow me, my brethren, to add, in the laſt place, if the change of manners could change the rules, if cuſtoms could juſtify abuſes, the eternal law of God ſhould then accommodate itſelf to the inconſtancy of the times, and to the ridiculous taſte of men: a goſpel would then be neceſſary for every age and for every nation; for our cuſtoms were not eſtabliſhed in the times of our fathers, and undoubtedly they ſhall not paſs to our laſt deſcendants; they are not common to all the nations who, like us, worſhip Jeſus Chriſt. Therefore, theſe cuſtoms cannot either become our rule or change it; for the rule is of all times and of all places; therefore, new manners do not form a new goſpel, ſeeing we ſhould anathematiſe even an angel who ſhould come to announce to us a new one; and that the goſpel would be no longer but a human, and little to be truſted law for men, if it could change with men: therefore, the rules and duties are not to be judged by manners and cuſtoms, but the manners and cuſtoms are to be judged by the duties and rules: therefore, it is the law of God which ought to be the conſtant rule of the times, and not the variation of times to become even the rule of the law of God.

No longer tell us then, my brethren, that the times are no longer the ſame; but the law of God, is it not? That you cannot reform manners univerſally eſtabliſhed; but

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you are not charged with the reformation of the univerſe: change yourſelf; ſave your own ſoul with which you are entruſted; behold all that is exacted of you: laſtly, that the Chriſtians of the primitive times had either more force or more grace than we: ah! they had more faith, more conſtancy, more love for Jeſus Chriſt, more contempt for the world: behold all that diſtinguiſhed them from us.

Have we not the ſame ſources of grace as they, the ſame miniſtry, the ſame altar, the ſame victim? Do the mercies of the Lord not flow with the ſame abundance upon his church? Have we not ſtill among us pure and holy ſouls, who renew the fervour and faith of the primitive times, and who are living proofs of the poſſibility of the duties, and of the mercies of the Lord upon his people? "Tell us no longer then," ſays the ſpirit of God, "that "the former days were better than theſe; for thou doſt "not enquire wiſely concerning this." To follow Jeſus Chriſt, ſufferance muſt always be required: in all ages, it hath been neceſſary to bear his croſs, not to conform to the corrupted age, and to live as ſtrangers upon the earth: in all times, the holy have had the ſame paſſions as we to reſiſt, the ſame abuſes to ſhun, the ſame ſnares to dread, the ſame obſtacles to ſurmount: and, if there be any difference here, it is, that, in former times, it was not merely arbitrary cuſtoms which they had to ſhun, nor the deriſions of the world which they had only to dread, in declaring for Jeſus Chriſt; it was the moſt cruel puniſhments to which they muſt expoſe themſelves; it was the power of the Ceſars, and the rage of tyrants, which they muſt deſpiſe; it was ſuperſtitions, become reſpectable through their antiquity, countenanced by the laws of the empire, and by the conſent of almoſt all the people, which they had to ſhake off: it was, in a word, the whole

univerſe which they had to arm againſt themſelves. But the faith of theſe pious men was ſtronger than puniſhments, than the tyrants, than the Ceſars, than the whole world, and our faith cannot hold out againſt the abſurdity of cuſtoms, or the puerility of deriſion; and the goſpel which could formerly make martyrs, ſcarcely at preſent can it form a believer. The law of God is then immutable in its duration; always the ſame in all times and in all places; but it is likewiſe immutable in its extent, and the ſame for all ſtations and conditions: this is my ſecond reflection.

PART II. The moſt eſſential character of the law of Jeſus Chriſt, is that of uniting, under the ſame rules, the Jew and the Gentile, the Greek and the Barbarian, the great and the people, the prince and the ſubject; in it there is no longer exception of perſons. The law of Moſes, at leaſt in its cuſtoms and in its ceremonies, was given only to a ſingle people; but Jeſus Chriſt is an univerſal legiſlator; his law, as his death, is for all men. He came, of all people to make only one people; of all ſtations and of all conditions to form only one body; it is the ſame ſpirit which animates it, the ſame laws which govern it: different functions may there be exerciſed, different places, more or leſs honourable, be occupied; but it is the ſame ſpring which rules all the members of it. All theſe hateful diſtinctions, which formerly divided men, are deſtroyed by the church: that holy law knows neither poor nor rich; neither noble nor baſe born; neither maſter nor ſlave; it ſees in men only the title of believer, which equals them all: it diſtinguiſhes them not by their names, or by their offices, but by their virtues; and the greateſt in its ſight are thoſe who are the moſt holy.

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Nevertheleſs, a ſecond illuſion, pretty common againſt the immutability of the law of God, is the perſuaſion that it changes and becomes mollified in favour of rank and of birth; that its obligations are leſs rigid for perſons born to elevation; and that the obſtacles, which high places and the manners attached to grandeur throw in the way of the obſervance of the ſtrict duties of the goſpel, and which render the practice of them almoſt impoſſible to the great, likewiſe render their tranſgreſſion more innocent. They figure to themſelves that the abuſes, permitted in all times by cuſtom to the great, are likewiſe accorded to them by the law of God, and that there is another path of ſalvation for them than for the people. Thence, all the laws of the church violated; the times and the days conſecrated to abſtinence, confounded with the reſt of days, are looked upon as privileges refuſed to the vulgar, and reſerved ſolely for rank and birth: thence, to live only for the ſenſes; to be attentive only to ſatisfy them, to refuſe nothing to taſte, to vanity, to curioſity, to idleneſs, to ambition, to make a God of one's ſelf; the ſame proſperity which facilitates all theſe exceſſes, excuſes and juſtifies them.

But, my brethren, I have already ſaid it, the goſpel is the law of all men: great, people, you have all promiſed, upon the ſacred fonts, to obſerve it. The church, in receiving you into the number of her children, hath not propoſed to the great other vows to make, and other rules to practiſe, than to the common people: you have all there made the ſame promiſes; all ſworn, in the face of the altars, to obſerve the ſame goſpel. The church hath not then demanded of you, if, by your birth according to the fleſh, you were great, or of the common people; but if, by your regeneration in Jeſus Chriſt, you meant to be faithful, and to engage yourſelf to follow his law:

law: upon the vow which you made of it, ſhe hath placed the holy goſpel upon your head, in order to mark that you ſubmitted yourſelf to that ſacred yoke.

Now, my brethren, all the duties of the goſpel are reduced to two points. Some are propoſed in order to reſiſt and to weaken that fund of corruption which we bear from our birth; the others in order to perfect that firſt grace of the Chriſtian which we have received in baptiſm; that is to ſay, the one in order to deſtroy in us the old Adam; the others in order to make Jeſus Chriſt to grow there. Violence, ſelf-denial, and mortification, regard the firſt: prayer, retirement, vigilance, contempt for the world, deſire of inviſible riches, are compriſed in the ſecond: behold the whole goſpel. Now, I demand of you, what is there in theſe two deſcriptions of duties from which rank or birth can diſpenſe you?

Ought you to pray leſs than the other believers? Have you fewer favours to aſk than they, fewer obſtacles to overcome, fewer ſnares to avoid, fewer deſires to reſiſt? Alas! the more you are exalted, the more do dangers augment, the more do occaſions of ſin ſpring up under your feet, the more is the world beloved, the more doth every thing favour your paſſions, the more doth every thing militate againſt your good deſires; is it in a ſituation ſo terrible for ſalvation that you find privileges which render it more mild and more commodious. The more, therefore, that you are exalted, the more doth mortification become neceſſary to you; for, the more that pleaſures corrupt your heart, the more is vigilance neceſſary, becauſe the dangers are more frequent; the more ought faith to be lively, becauſe every thing around you weakens and extinguiſhes it; the more ought prayer to be continual, becauſe the grace,

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in order to ſupport you, ought to be more powerful; humility of heart more heroical, becauſe the attachments to things here below are more unavoidable: laſtly, the more you are exalted, the more doth ſalvation become difficult to you; this is the only privilege you can expect from elevation. Alſo, thou often warneſt us, great God, that thy kingdom is only for the poor and the lowly: thou ſpeakeſt not of the difficulty of ſalvation for the great and the powerful, but in terms which would ſeem to deprive them of all hope of pretending to it, if we knew not that thou wiſheſt the ſalvation of all men, and that thy grace is ſtill more powerful for our ſanctification, than proſperity for our corruption.

And ſurely, my brethren, if grandeur and elevation were to render our condition more fortunate and more favourable with regard to ſalvation, in vain would the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt teach us to dread grandeurs and human proſperities; in vain would it be ſaid to us: That bleſſed are they who weep, and who ſuffer here below; that wo unto thoſe who laugh now, for they ſhall mourn and weep; and unto thoſe who are rich, for they have received their conſolation; and that, to receive our reward in this world, through the tranſitory riches and honours which we there receive, is almoſt a certain ſign that we are not to receive it in the other. On the contrary, grandeur and proſperity would become a ſtate worthy of envy, even according to the rules of faith; againſt the maxim of Jeſus Chriſt, it would be neceſſary to call thoſe happy who are immerſed in pleaſures and in oppulence; ſince, beſides the comforts of a ſmiling fortune, they would likewiſe find there a way of ſalvation more mild and more eaſy than in an obſcure ſtate; thoſe who ſuffer, and who weep here below, would then be the moſt miſerable of all men; ſince,

ſince, to all the bitterneſſes of their condition, would likewiſe be added thoſe of a goſpel, more rigorous and more auſtere for them than for the perſons born in abundance. What new goſpel would it then be neceſſary to announce to you, if ſuch were the rules of the morality of Jeſus Chriſt?

But I ſay not even enough. Granting that proſperity ſhould not exact more rigid precautions in conſequence of the dangers which ſurround it, it would exact, at leaſt, more rigorous reparations, through the crimes and exceſſes which are inſeparable from it. Alas! my brethren, is it not among you that the paſſions no longer know any bounds; that the jealouſies are more keen, the hatreds more laſting revenge more honourable, evil-ſpeaking more cruel, ambition more boundleſs, and voluptuouſneſs more ſhameful? Is it not among the great that the moſt ſhocking debauchery even refines upon the common crimes; that diſſipation becomes an art; and that in order to prevent thoſe diſguſts inſeparable from licentiouſneſs, reſources are ſought in guilt againſt guilt itſelf? What indulgence then can you promiſe yourſelves on the part of religion? If the moſt righteous be reſponſible for the whole law, ſhould the greateſt ſinners be diſcharged from it? Meaſure your duties upon your crimes, and not upon your rank; judge of yourſelves by the inſults which you have offered to God, and not by the vain homages which are paid to you by men; number the days and the years of your crimes which ſhall be the eternal titles of your condemnation, and not the years and the ages of the antiquity of your race, which are only vain titles written upon the aſhes of your tombs; examine what you owe to God, and not what men owe to you. If the world were to judge you, you might promiſe yourſelf diſtinctions and preferences; but

but the world ſhall itſelf be judged; and he, who will judge it and you alſo, ſhall diſtinguiſh men only by their vices or by their virtues. He will not demand the names, he will demand only the deeds: calculate thereupon the diſtinctions which you ought to expect.

Thus, we ſee not that Jeſus Chriſt, in the goſpel, propoſed to the princes of the people, and to the grandees of Jeruſalem, other maxims than to the citizens of Judea, and to his diſciples, all taken from the loweſt ranks of the people; he ſpeaks in the capital of Judea, and before all that Paleſtine had the moſt illuſtrious, as he ſpeaks upon the borders of the ſea, or upon the mountains, to that obſcure populace which followed him; his maxims are not changed with the rank of thoſe who liſten to him. The croſs, violence, contempt of the world, ſelf-denial, abſtinence from pleaſures: behold what he announces at Jeruſalem, the ſeat of kings, as at Nazareth, the moſt obſcure place of Judea; to that young man who was ſo rich, as to the children of Zebedee, whoſe only inheritance was their nets: to the ſiſters of Lazarus, of a diſtinguiſhed rank in Paleſtine, as to the woman of Samaria of a more obſcure condition; his enemies themſelves confeſſed that this was his peculiar character, and were forced to render him this juſtice, that he taught the way of God in truth, and that he had no reſpect of rank or of perſons.

What do I ſay? Even after his death the goſpel ſeemed a doctrine ſent down from heaven, only becauſe that, announcing to the great and to the powerful ſorrowful and crucifying maxims, apparently ſo incompatible with their ſtation, they, nevertheleſs, ſubmitted to the yoke of Jeſus Chriſt, and embraced a law which amid all the proſperity and abundance, permitted to them no more pleaſures and comforts

comforts here below, than to the common and simple people. And, in effect, why should the first defenders of faith have regarded the conversion of Cesars, and of the powerful of the age, as a proof of the truth of the divinity of the gospel? What would there be so surprising, that the rich and powerful had embraced a doctrine which would distinguish them from the people by a greater indulgence; which, while it would prescribe tears, fasting, self-denial to others, would relax in favour of the great, and would consent that profusions, pleasures, sensualities, gaming, public places, all so rigorously forbidden to common believers, became an innocent occupation for them; and, that what is a road of perdition for others, should, for them alone be a road of salvation? It would then be the wisdom of the age which would have established the gospel, and not the folly of the cross; it would be the artifices and the deferences of men, and not the arm of the Almighty; it would be flesh and blood, and not the power of God; and the conversion of the universe would have nothing more wonderful, than the establishment of superstitions and of sects.

And candidly, my brethren, if the gospel had distinctions to make, and condescensions to grant, if the law of God could relax something of its severity, would it be in favour of those who are born to rank and to abundance? What! It would preserve all its rigour for the poor and the unfortunate? It would condemn to tears, to fastings, to penitence, to poverty, those unfortunate souls whose days are mingled with almost nothing but sufference and sorrow, and whose only comfort is that of eating with temperance the bread earned with the sweat of their brow? And it would discharge from these rigorous duties the grandees of the earth? And it would exact nothing painful of those whose days are only diversified by the variety of their plea-

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ſures? And it would reſerve all its indulgence for thoſe ſoft and voluptuous ſouls, who live only for the ſenſes, who believe that they are upon the earth for the ſole purpoſe of enjoying an iniquitous felicity, and who know no other god than themſelves?

Great God! It is the blindneſs which thy juſtice ſheds over human proſperities: after having corrupted the heart, they likewiſe extinguiſh all the lights of faith. It rarely happens but that the great, ſo enlightened upon the intereſts of the earth, upon the ways to fortune and to glory, upon the ſecret ſprings which give motion to courts and to empires, live in a profound ignorance of the ways of ſalvation. They have been ſo much accuſtomed to preference by the world, that they are perſuaded they ought likewiſe to find them in religion. Becauſe men do them credit for the ſmalleſt ſteps taken in their favour, they believe, O my God! that thou regardeſt them with the ſame eyes as men; and that, in fulfilling ſome weak duties of piety, in taking ſome ſmall ſteps for thee, they go even beyond what they owe to thee: as if their ſmalleſt religious works acquired a new merit from their rank; in place of which, they acquire it, in thy ſight, only from that faith and from that charity which animates them.

It is thus that the law of God, immutable in its extent, is the ſame for all ſtations, for the great and for the people. But it is likewiſe immutable in all the ſituations of life; and it is neither a difficult conjuncture, nor perplexity, nor apparent danger, nor pretext of public good, in which to violate, or even to ſoften it, becomes a legitimate and neceſſary modification: this was to have been my laſt reflection; but I abridge and go on.

Yes, my brethren, every thing becomes reaſon and neceſſity againſt our duties, that is to ſay, againſt the law of God; ſituations the leaſt dangerous, conjunctures the leaſt embarraſſing, furniſh us with pretexts to violate it with ſafety, and perſuade us that the law of God would be unjuſt, and would exact too much of men, if, on theſe occaſions, it were not to uſe indulgence with regard to us.

Thus, the law of God commands us to render to each that which is his due, to retrench, in order to pay thoſe debts incurred through our exceſſes, and not to permit that our unfortunate creditors ſuffer by our ſenſeleſs profuſions: nevertheleſs, the general perſuaſion is that, in a grand place, it is neceſſary to ſupport the eclat of a public dignity; that the honour of the maſter requires that mean and ſorry externals diſgrace not the elevated poſt which he hath confided to us; that we are reſponſible to the ſovereign, to the ſtate, to ourſelves, before being ſo to individuals: and that public propriety is then ſuperior to the particular rule.

Thus, the law of God enjoins us to tear out the eye which giveth offence, and to caſt it from us; to ſeparate ourſelves from an object which, in all times, hath been the rock of our innocence, and near to which we can never be in ſafety: nevertheleſs, the noiſe which a rupture would make, the ſuſpicions which it might awaken in the public mind, the ties of ſociety, of relationſhip, of friendſhip, which ſeem to render the ſeparation impoſſible without eclat, perſuade us that it is not then commanded, and that a danger, become as if neceſſary, becomes a ſecurity to us.

Thus,

Thus, the law of God commands us to render glory to the truth; not to betray our conſcience by iniquitouſly withholding it; that is to ſay, not to diſſemble it, through human intereſts, from thoſe to whom our duty obliges us to announce it: nevertheleſs, we perſuade ourſelves that truths, which would be unavailing, ought to be ſuppreſſed; and that a liberty, of which the only fruit would be that of riſking our fortune, and of rendering ourſelves hated, without rendering thoſe better to whom we owe the truth, would rather be an indiſcretion than a law of charity and of juſtice.

Thus, the law of God preſcribes to us to have in view, in public cares, only the utility of the people, for whom alone the authority is entruſted to us; to conſider ourſelves as charged with the intereſts of the multitude, as the avengers of injuſtice, the refuge againſt oppreſſion and poverty: nevertheleſs, we believe ourſelves to be ſituated in conjunctures, in which it is neceſſary to ſhut our eyes upon iniquity, to ſupport abuſes which we know to be untenable, to ſacrifice conſcience and duty to the neceſſity of the times, and, without ſcruple, to violate the cleareſt rules, becauſe the inconveniencies, which would ariſe from their obſervance, ſeem to render their tranſgreſſion neceſſary. Laſtly, Human pretexts, intereſts, and inconveniencies, always make the balance to turn to their ſide; and duty, and the law of God, always yield to conjunctures and to the neceſſity of the times.

Now, my brethren, I do not tell you, in the firſt place, that the intereſt of ſalvation is the greateſt of all intereſts; that fortune, life, reputation, the whole world itſelf, put in compariſon with your ſoul, ought to be reckoned as nothing; and that, though heaven and the earth ſhould change,

change, that the whole world ſhould periſh, and every evil burſt upon our head, theſe inconveniencies would always be infinitely leſs than the tranſgreſſion of the law of God.

2*dly*, I do not tell you that the law hath always, at leaſt, ſecurity in its favour againſt the pretext, becauſe the obligation of the law is clear and preciſe, in place of which the pretext, which introduces the exception, is always doubtful; and that, conſequently, to prefer the pretext to the law, is to leave a ſafe way, and to make choice of another, for which no perſon can be anſwerable to you.

Laſtly, I do not tell you that, the goſpel having been only given to us in order to detach us from the world and from ourſelves, and to make us die to all our terreſtrial affections, it is deceiving ourſelves to conſider, as inconveniencies, certain conſequences of that divine law, fatal either to our fortune, to our glory, or to our eaſe, and to perſuade ourſelves that it is then permitted to us to have recourſe to expedients which mollify it, and conciliate its ſeverity with the intereſts of our ſelf-love. Jeſus Chriſt hath never meant to preſcribe to us eaſy and commodious duties, and which take nothing from the paſſions; he came to bring the ſword and ſeparation to hearts, to divide man from his relations, from his friends, from himſelf; to hold out to us a way rugged and difficult to keep. Thus, what we call inconveniencies and unheard-of extremities, are, at bottom, only the ſpirit of the law, the moſt natural conſequences of the rules, and the end that Jeſus Chriſt had intended in preſcribing them to us.

That young man of the goſpel regarded as an inconveniency, the being unable to go to pay the laſt duties to his father, and to gather in what he had ſucceeded to, if he

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followed Jeſus Chriſt; and it was preciſely that ſacrifice which Jeſus Chriſt exacted of him. Thoſe men invited to the feaſt looked upon as an inconveniency, the one to forſake his county-houſe, the other his trade, the laſt to delay his marriage; and it was in order to break aſunder all theſe ties, which bound them ſtill too much to the earth, that the father of the family invited them to come and ſeat themſelves at the feaſt. Eſther, at firſt, conſidered as an inconveniency to go to appear before Ahaſuerus, contrary to the law of the empire, and to declare herſelf a daughter of Abraham, and protectreſs of the children of Iſrael; and, nevertheleſs, as the wiſe Mordecai repreſented to her, the Lord had raiſed her to that point of glory and proſperity only for that important occaſion. Whatever is a conſtraint to us, appears a reaſon againſt the law; and we take for inconveniencies the obligations themſelves.

Beſides, my brethren, is it not certain that the principal merit of our duties is derived from the obſtacles which never fail to oppoſe their practice; that the moſt eſſential character of the law of Jeſus Chriſt is that of exciting againſt it all the reaſons of fleſh and blood; and virtue would reſemble vice, if outwardly and inwardly it found in us only facilities and conveniencies? The righteous, my brethren, have never been peaceable obſervers of the holy rules: Abel found inconveniencies in the jealouſy of his own brother; Noah in the unbelief of his own citizens; Abraham in the diſputes of his ſervants; Joſeph in the dangers to which he was expoſed through his love of modeſty and the rage of a faithleſs woman; Daniel in the cuſtoms of a profane court; the pious Eſdras in the manners of his age; the noble Eleazar in the ſnares of a ſpecious temperament: laſtly, follow the hiſtory of the juſt, and you will ſee that, in all ages, all thoſe who have walked

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in the precepts and in the ordinances of the law, have experienced inconveniencies, in which righteouſneſs itſelf ſeemed to authoriſe the tranſgreſſion of the rules; have encountered obſtacles in their way, where the lights of an human reaſon ſeemed to decide in favour of the pretext againſt the law; in a word, where virtue ſeemed to condemn virtue itſelf; and that, conſequently, it is not new for the law of God to meet with obſtacles; but that it is new to pretend to find in theſe obſtacles legitimate excuſes for diſpenſing ourſelves from the law of God.

And the diciſive argument which confirms this truth is, that our paſſions alone form the conveniencies which authoriſe us in ſeeking mollifications to our duties and to the law of God; and that views of fortune, of glory, of favour, engage us in certain proceedings, juſtify them in our eyes, in ſpite of the evidence of rules which condemn them, only becauſe we love our glory and our fortune more than the rules themſelves.

Let us die to the world and to ourſelves, my brethren; let us reſtore to our heart the ſentiments of love and of preference, which it owes to its Lord: then every thing ſhall appear poſſible; difficulties ſhall, in an inſtant, be done away: and what we call inconveniencies either ſhall no longer be reckoned as any thing, or we ſhall conſider them as inſeparable proofs of virtue, and not as the excuſes of vice. How eaſy it is to find pretexts when we love them! Arguments are never wanting to the paſſions. Self-love is always ready in placing, at leaſt, appearances on its ſide; it always changes our weakneſſes into duties, and our inclinations ſoon become legitimate claims; and what in this is moſt deplorable, ſays St. Auguſtin, is that we call in even religion itſelf in aid of our paſſions; that

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we draw motives from piety, in order to violate piety itſelf; and that we have recourſe to holy pretexts to authoriſe iniquitous deſires.

It is thus, O my God! that almoſt our whole life is paſſed in ſeducing ourſelves; that we employ the lights of our reaſon only in darkening thoſe of faith; that we conſume the few days we have to paſs upon the earth only in ſeeking authorities for our paſſions, in imagining ſituations in which we believe ourſelves to be enabled to diſobey thee with impunity; that is to ſay, that all our cares, all our reflections, all the ſuperiority of our views, of our lights, of our talents, all the wiſdom of our meaſures and of our counſels, are limited to the accompliſhment of our ruin, and to conceal from ourſelves our eternal deſtruction.

Let us ſhun this evil, my brethren; let us reckon no way ſafe for us but that of the rules and of the law; and let us remember that there ſhall be more ſinners condemned through the pretexts which ſeem to authoriſe the tranſgreſſions of the law, than through the avowed crimes which violate it. It is thus that the law of God, after having been the rule of our manners upon the earth, ſhall be their eternal conſolation in heaven.

SERMON

SERMON X.

FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

LUKE ii. 10.

For, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which ſhall be to all people; for unto you is born, this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord.

BEHOLD, in effect, the grand tidings which, for four thouſand years, the world had expected; behold the grand event which ſo many prophets had foretold; ſo many ceremonies had figured: ſo many righteous had awaited, and which all nature ſeemed to promiſe, and to haſten by the univerſal corruption ſpread through all fleſh; behold the grand bleſſing which God's goodneſs prepared for men, after the infidelity of their firſt parent had rendered them all ſubject to ſin and death.

The Saviour, the Chriſt, the Lord, at laſt appears this day on the earth. The over-ſhadowed bring forth the righteous; the ſtar of Jacob appears to the univerſe; the ſceptre is departed from Judah, and he, who was to come, is arrived; the age of darkneſs is accompliſhed; the promiſed ſign of the Lord to Judea hath appeared; a virgin has conceived and brought forth, and out of Bethlehem comes the leader who is to enlighten and govern all Iſrael.

What

What new bleſſings, my brethren, doth this birth not announce to men? It would not during ſo many ages, have been announced, awaited, deſired; it would not have formed the religion of a whole people, the object of all the prophecies; the unravelling of all the figures, the ſole end of all the proceedings of God towards men, had it not been the grandeſt mark of his love which he could give them. What a bleſſed night is that which preſides at this divine bringing-forth! It hath ſeen the light of the world ſhine forth in its darkneſs; the heavens reſound with joy and ſongs of thankſgiving.

But, my brethren, we muſt participate in the bleſſings which this birth is meant to bring us, in order to enter into all the tranſports of delight which it ſpreads through the heavens and the earth. The common joy is founded only on the common ſalvation which is offered to us; and if, in ſpite of this aid we ſtill obſtinately perſiſt in periſhing, the church weeps over us, and we mingle mourning and ſorrow with that joy with which ſuch bleſſed tidings inſpire it.

Now, what are the ineſtimable bleſſings which this birth brings to men? The heavenly ſpirits come themſelves to make it known to the ſhepherds; it comes to render glory to God, and peace to men; and behold the whole foundation of this grand myſtery laid open. To God, that glory of which men had wiſhed to deprive him; to men, that peace of which they had never ceaſed their ſtruggles to deprive themſelves.

PART I. Man had been placed upon the earth for the ſole purpoſe of rendering, to the author of his being, that glory and that homage which were his due. All called him

to theſe duties; and every thing, which ought to have called, removed him from them. To his ſupreme Majeſty he owed his adoration and his homage; to his paternal goodneſs his love; to his infinite wiſdom, the ſacrifice of his reaſon and of his lights. Theſe duties, engraven on his heart, and born with him, were ſtill alſo inceſſantly proclaimed to him by all creatures; he could neither liſten to himſelf, nor to all things around him, without finding them; nevertheleſs, he forgets, he effaces them from his heart. He no longer ſaw in the work, that honour and that worſhip which were due to the ſovereign Architect; in the bleſſings with which he loaded him, that love which he owed to his benefactor; in the obſcurity ſpread through even natural cauſes, that impoſſibility, much leſs, of ſathoming the ſecrecies of God, and that miſtruſt, in which he ought to live, of his own lights. Idolatry, therefore, rendered to the creature that worſhip which the Creator had reſerved for himſelf alone: the ſynagogue honoured him from the lips, and that love, which it owed to him, was confined to external homages totally unworthy of him; philoſophy loſt itſelf in its own ideas, meaſured the lights of God by thoſe of men, and vainly believed that reaſon, which knew not itſelf, was able to know all truth: three ſores, ſpread over the face of the whole earth. In a word, God was no longer either known or glorified, and man was no longer known to himſelf.

And, *1ſtly*, To what exceſſes had idolatry not carried its profane worſhip? The death of a perſon loved, quickly exalted him to a divinity; and his vile aſhes, on which his nothingneſs was ſtamped in characters ſo indelible, became themſelves the title of his glory and of his immortality. Conjugal love made gods to itſelf; impure love followed the example, and determined to have its altars: the

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wife and the miſtreſs, the huſband and the lover, had temples, prieſts, and ſacrifices. The folly, or the general corruption, adopted a worſhip ſo ridiculous and ſo abominable; the whole univerſe was infected with it; the majeſty of the laws of the empire authoriſed it; and the magnificence of the temples, the pomp of the ſacrifices, the immenſe riches of the images, rendered that folly reſpectable. Every people was jealous in having its gods; in default of man they offered incenſe to the beaſt: impure homages became the worſhip of theſe impure divinities; the towns, the mountains, the fields, the deſerts, were ſtained with them, and beheld ſupurb edifices conſecrated to pride, to laſciviouſneſs, to revenge. The number of the divinities equalled that of the paſſions; the gods were almoſt as numerous as the men; all became god with man; and the true God was the only one unknown to man.

The world was plunged, almoſt from its creation, in the horror of this darkneſs; every age added to it freſh impieties. In proportion as the appointed time of the deliverer drew near, the depravity of men ſeemed to increaſe. Rome itſelf, miſtreſs of the univerſe, gave way to all the different worſhips of the nations ſhe had ſubjugated: and beheld exalted, within her walls, the different idols of ſo many conquered countries, that they became the public momuments of her folly and blindneſs, rather than of her victories.

But, after all, though all fleſh had corrupted his way, God no longer wiſhed to pour out his wrath upon men, nor to exterminate them by a freſh deluge; he wiſhed to ſave them. He had placed in the heavens the ſign of his covenant with the world; and that ſign was not the ſhining, though vulgar rainbow which appears in the clouds;

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it was Jeſus Chriſt his only Son, the word made fleſh, the true ſeal of the eternal covenant, and the ſole light which comes to enlighten the whole world.

He appears on the earth, and reſtores to his Father that glory of which the impiety of a public worſhip had wiſhed to deprive him. The homage rendered to him, by his holy ſoul united to the world, at once makes amends to his ſupreme Majeſty for all the honours which the univerſe had hitherto denied him, in order to proſtitute them to a creature. A Man-God adorer renders more glory to the divinity than all idolatrous ages and nations had deprived him of; and ſuch homage muſt indeed have been agreeable to the ſovereign God, ſeeing it alone effaced idolatry from the earth; made the blood of impure victims ceaſe to flow; overturned the profane altars; ſilenced the oracles of demons; reduced to duſt the vain idols, and changed their ſupurb temples, till then the receptacle of every abomination, into houſes of adoration and prayer. Thus was the univerſe changed: the only God, unknown even in Athens, and in thoſe cities moſt celebrated for knowledge and poliſhed manners, was worſhipped; the world acknowledged its Author: God entered into his rights; a worſhip worthy of him was eſtabliſhed over the whole earth; and he had every where adorers, who worſhipped him in ſpirit and in truth.

Behold the firſt bleſſing accruing from the birth of Jeſus Chriſt, and the firſt glory which he renders to his Father. But, my brethren is this grand bleſſing for us? We no longer worſhip vain idols; an inceſtuous Jupiter, a laſcivious Venus, a cruel and revengeful Mars; but is God, therefore, more glorified among us? In their place do we not ſubſtitute fortune, voluptuouſneſs, court favour, the world

world, with all its pleaſures? For, whatever we love more than God, that we worſhip, whatever we prefer to God, that becomes our god; whatever becomes the ſole object of our thoughts, of our deſires, of our affections, of our fears and hopes, becomes likewiſe the object of our worſhip; and our gods are our paſſions, to which we ſacrifice the true God.

Now, what idols of this kind ſtill remain in the Chriſtian world! You, that unfortunate creature, to whom you have proſtituted your heart; to whom you ſacrifice your wealth, your fortune, your glory, your peace; and from whom neither religious motives nor even thoſe of the world can detach you, that is your idol: and what leſs is ſhe than your divinity, ſince, in your madneſs, you do not refuſe her even the name? You that court that fortune which engroſſes you, to which you devote all your cares, all your exertions, all your movements, in ſhort, your whole ſoul, mind, will, and life, that is your idol; and what criminal homage do you refuſe from the moment that it is exacted of you, and that it may become the price of its favour? You, that ſhameful intemperance, which debaſes your name and birth; which no longer accords even with our manners; which has drowned and beſotted all your talents in the exceſſes of wine and debauchery; which, by rendering you callous to every thing elſe, leaves you neither reliſh nor feeling but for the brutal pleaſures of the table, that is your idol: you think that you live only in thoſe moments given to it; and your heart renders more homage to that infamous and abject god than your deſpicable and profane ſongs. The paſſions formerly made the gods; and Jeſus Chriſt hath deſtroyed theſe idols only by deſtroying the paſſions which had raiſed them up: you exalt them again, by reviving all the paſſions which had rendered the whole

world

world idolatrous. And what matters it to know a ſingle god, if you elſewhere beſtow your homages? Worſhip is in the heart; and if the true God be not the God of your heart, you place, like the pagans, vile creatures in his place, and you render not to him that glory which is his due.

Thus Jeſus Chriſt doth not confine himſelf to manifeſting the name of his Father to men, and to eſtabliſhing, on the ruins of idols, the knowledge of the true God. He raiſeth up worſhippers, who reckon external homages as nothing, unleſs animated and ſanctified by love; and who ſhall conſider mercy, juſtice, and holineſs, as the offerings moſt worthy of God, and the moſt ſhining attendants of their worſhip: ſecond bleſſing from the birth of Jeſus Chriſt, and ſecond ſort of glory which he renders to his Father.

In effect, God was known, ſays the prophet, in Judea; Jeruſalem beheld no idols in the public places, uſurping the homages due to the God of Abraham; "there was neither "iniquity in Jacob, nor perverſeneſs in Iſrael:" that ſingle portion of the earth was free from the general contagion. But the magnificence of its temple, the pomp of its ſacrifices, the ſplendour of its ſolemnities, the exactitude of its lawful obſervances, conſtituted the whole merit of its worſhip; all religion was confined to theſe external duties. Its morals were not leſs criminal: Injuſtice, fraud, falſehod, adultery, every vice ſubſiſted, and were even countenanced by theſe vain appearances of worſhip: God was honoured from the lips; but the heart of that ungrateful people was ever diſtant from him.

Jeſus Chriſt comes to open the eyes of Judea on an error ſo groſs, ſo ancient, and ſo injurious to his Father. He comes

comes to inform them, that man may be ſatisfied with externals alone, but that God regards only the heart; that every outward homage which withholds it from him, is an inſult and an hypocriſy, rather than a true worſhip; that it matters little to purify the external, if the internal be full of infection and putrefaction; and that God is truly worſhipped only by loving him.

But, Alas! my brethren, is this miſtake, ſo wretched and ſo often reproached to the ſynagogue by Jeſus Chriſt, not ſtill the error of the majority of us? To what, in fact, is the whole of our worſhip reduced? To ſome external ceremonies; to fulfilling certain public duties preſcribed by the law; and even this is the religion of the moſt reſpectable. They come to aſſiſt in the holy myſteries; they do not, without ſcruple, depart from the laws of the church; they repeat ſome prayers which cuſtom has conſecrated; they go through the ſolemnities, and increaſe the crowd which runs to our temples: behold the whole. But are they, in conſequence, more detached from the world, and from its criminal pleaſures? Leſs occupied with the cares of a vain dreſs, or of fortune? More inclined to break off a criminal engagement, or to fly opportunities which have ſo often been a rock to their innocence? Do they bring to theſe external practices of religion, a pure heart, a lively faith, a guileleſs charity? All their paſſions ſubmit amid all theſe religious works, which are given to cuſtom rather than religion.

And remark, I pray you, my brethren, that they would not dare to diſpenſe themſelves altogether from them; to live, like impious, without any profeſſion of worſhip, and without fulfilling at leaſt ſome of its public duties: They would conſider themſelves as anathematiſed, and worthy of the thunder of heaven. And yet they dare to fully theſe holy

holy duties by the moſt criminal manners! And yet they do not view them themſelves with horror, while rendering uſeleſs theſe ſuperficial remains of religion, by a life which religion condemns and abhors! And they dread not the wrath of God, in continuing crimes which attract it on our heads, and in limitting all that is his due to vain homages which inſult him!

Nevertheleſs, as I have already ſaid, of all the worldly theſe are the moſt prudent, and, in the eyes of the world, the moſt regular. They have not yet thrown off the yoke, like ſo many others; they do not arrogate to themſelves a ſhocking glory in not believing in God; they blaſpheme not what they do not know; they do not conſider religion as a mockery and a human invention; they ſtill wiſh to hold to it by ſome externals; but they hold not to it by the heart; but they diſhonour it by their irregularities; but they are not Chriſtians but in name. Thus, even in a greater degree than formerly under the ſynagogue, the magnificent externals of religion ſubſiſt among us, along with a more profound and more general depravity of manners than ever the prophets reproached to the obſtinacy and hypocriſy of the Jews: thus, that religion, in which we glory, is no longer, to the greateſt number of believers, but a ſuperficial worſhip: thus, that new covenant which ought to be written only in the heart; that law of ſpirit and life, which ought to render men wholly ſpiritual; that inward worſhip, which ought to have given to God worſhippers in ſpirit and in truth, has given him only phantoms, only fictitious adorers; the mere appearances of worſhip; in a word, but a people ſtill Jewiſh, which honours him from the lips, but whoſe corrupted heart, ſtained with a thouſand crimes, chained by a thouſand iniquitous paſſions, is always far diſtant from him.

Behold

Behold the ſecond bleſſing, of the birth of Jeſus Chriſt, in which we have no part. He comes to aboliſh a worſhip wholly external, which was confined to ſacrifices of animals and lawful ceremonies, and which, in not rendering to God the homage of our love, alone capable of glorifying him, rendered not to him that glory which is his due: in place of theſe appearances of religion, he comes to ſubſtitute a law which ought to be fulfilled wholly in the heart; a worſhip of which the love of his Father ought to be the firſt and the principal homage. Nevertheleſs, this holy worſhip, this new precept, this ſacred truſt, which he hath confided to us, has miſerably degenerated in our hands; we have turned it into a worſhip wholly phariſaical, in which the heart has no part; which has no influence in changing our irregular propenſities; which has no effect upon our manners, and which only renders us ſo much the more criminal, as we abuſe the bleſſing which ought to waſh out and purify all our crimes.

Laſtly, Men had likewiſe wiſhed to raviſh from God the glory of his providence and of his eternal wiſdom. Philoſophers, ſtruck with the abſurdity of a worſhip which multiplied gods to infinity, and forced, by the ſole lights of reaſon, to acknowledge one ſole Supreme Being, diſfigured the nature of that Being by a thouſand abſurd opinions. Some figured to themſelves an indolent god; retired within himſelf; in full poſſeſſion of his own happineſs; diſdaining to abaſe himſelf by paying attention to what paſſes on the earth; reckoning as nothing men whom he had created; equally inſenſible to their virtues as to their vices; and leaving wholly to chance the courſe of ages and ſeaſons, the revolution of empires, the lot of each individual, the whole machine of this vaſt univerſe, and the whole diſpenſation of human things. Others ſubjected him to a fatal chain

of events; they made him a god without liberty and without power; and while they regarded him as the maſter of men, they believed him to be the ſlave of deſtiny. The errors of reaſon were then the only rule of religion, and of the belief of thoſe who were conſidered as even the wiſeſt and moſt enlightened.

Jeſus Chriſt comes to reſtore to his Father that glory of which the vain reaſonings of philoſophy had deprived him. He comes to teach to men that faith is the ſource of true lights; and that the ſacrifices of reaſon is the firſt ſtep of Chriſtian philoſophy. He comes to fix uncertainty, by inſtructing us in what we ought to know of the Supreme Being, and what, with regard to him, we ought not to know.

It was not, in effect, ſufficient that men, in order to render glory to God, ſhould make a ſacrifice to him of their life, as to the author of their being, and ſhould, by that avowal, acknowledge the impiety of idolatry; that they ſhould make a ſacrifice to him of their love and of their heart, as to their ſovereign felicity, and thereby proclaim the inſufficiency and the inutility of the external and phariſaical worſhip of the ſynagogue; it was likewiſe required, that to him they ſhould ſacrifice their reaſon, as to their wiſdom and to their eternal truth, and thus be undeceived with regard to the vain reſearches and the conceited knowledge of philoſophers.

Now, the ſole birth of a Man-God, the ineffable union of our nature with a divine perſon, diſconcerts all human reaſon; and this incomprehenſible myſtery, held out to men as their whole knowledge, their whole truth, their whole philoſophy, their whole religion, at once makes them feel, that the truth, which they hitherto had in vain ſought,

ſought, muſt be ſought; not by vain efforts, but by the ſacrifice of reaſon and of our feeble lights.

But, alas! where among us are believers who make a thorough ſacrifice of their reaſon to faith; and who, rejecting their own lights, humble their eyes, in a reſpectful and ſilent adoration, before the majeſtic impenetrability of religion? I ſpeak not of thoſe impious, ſtill to be found among us, who deny a God, Ah! we muſt leave them to the horror and the indignation of the whole univerſe which knows a divinity, and which worſhips him; or rather leave them to the horror of their own conſcience, which inwardly invokes and calls upon him in ſpite of themſelves, while outwardly they are glorifying themſelves in profeſſing not to know him.

I ſpeak of the majority of believers, who have an idea of the divinity, almoſt equally falſe and equally human, as had formerly the pagan philoſophers; who conſider him as nothing in all the accidents of life; who live as if chance or the caprice of men determined all things here below; and who acknowledge good-luck and bad-luck as the two ſole divinities which govern the world, and which preſide over every thing relative to the earth. I ſpeak of thoſe men of little faith who, far from adoring the ſecrecies of futurity in the profound and impenetrable councils of providence, go to ſearch for them in ridiculous and childiſh propheeies; attribute to man a knowledge which God hath ſolely reſerved to himſelf; with a ſenſeleſs belief await, from the dreams of a falſe prophet, events and revolutions which are to decide the deſtiny of nations and empires: found thereupon vain hopes for themſelves, and renew either the folly of pagan augurs and ſoothſayers, or the impiety of the pythoneſs of Saul, and of the oracles of Del-

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phi and Dodona. I ſpeak of thoſe who wiſh to penetrate into the eternal ways of God on our lots; and who, being unable, by the ſole powers of reaſon, to ſolve the inſurmountable difficulties of the myſteries of grace with regard to the ſalvation of men, far from crying out with the apoſtle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and "knowledge of God!" are tempted to believe, either that God doth not interfere in our ſalvation; or, if he do, that it is needleſs for us to interfere in it ourſelves. I ſpeak of thoſe diſſolute characters in the world, who always find plauſible and convincing, though, in fact, weak and fooliſh in the extreme, whatever unbelief oppoſes to faith; who are ſtaggered by the firſt frivolous doubt propoſed by the impious; who appear as if they would be delighted that religion were falſe; and who are leſs touched with that reſpectable load of proofs which overpower a conceited reaſon and its truth, than with a ſenſeleſs diſcourſe which oppoſes it, in which there is generally nothing important but the boldneſs of the impiety and of the blaſphemy. Laſtly, I ſpeak of many believers who turn over to the people the belief of ſo many wonderful actions which the hiſtory of religion has preſerved to us; who ſeem to believe that, whatever is above the power of man, is likewiſe beyond the power of God; and who refuſe credit to the miracles of a religion which is ſolely founded on them, and which is itſelf the greateſt of all miracles.

Behold how we ſtill ſnatched from God that glory which the birth of Jeſus Chriſt had rendered to him. It had taught us to ſacrifice our own lights to the incomprehenſible myſtery of his manifeſtation in our fleſh, and no longer to live but by faith; it had fixed the uncertainties of the human mind, and recalled it from the errors and the abyſs in which reaſon had plunged it, to the way of truth

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and life, and we abandon it: and even under the empire of faith, we wiſh ſtill to walk as formerly, under the ſtandards, if I may venture to ſpeak in this manner, of a weak reaſon: the myſteries of religion, which we cannot comprehend, ſhock us; we ſuſpect, we reform all; we would have God to think like man. Without altogether loſing our faith, we ſuffer it to be inwardly weakened; we allow it to remain inactive: and it is this relaxation of faith which has corrupted our manners; multiplied vices; inflamed all hearts with a love of things preſent; extinguiſhed the love of riches to come; placed trouble, hatred, and diſſention among believers, and effaced thoſe original marks of innocence, of ſanctity, and of charity, which at firſt had rendered Chriſtianity ſo reſpectable even to thoſe who refuſed ſubmiſſion to it. But not only doth the birth of Jeſus Chriſt reſtore to God that glory of which men had wiſhed to deprive him; it likewiſe reſtores to men that peace, of which they had never ceaſed to deprive themſelves: "And on earth peace, good will towards "men."

PART II. An univerſal peace reigned throughout the univerſe when Jeſus Chriſt, the "Prince of Peace," appeared on the earth: all the nations ſubject to the Roman empire peaceably ſupported the yoke of thoſe haughty maſters of the world: Rome herſelf, after civil diſſentions, which had almoſt depopulated her walls, filled the iſlands and deſerts with her proſcribed, and bathed Europe and Aſia with the blood of her citizens, breathed from the horror of theſe troubles, and reunited under the authority of a Ceſar, experienced in ſlavery, a peace which ſhe had never, during the enjoyment of her liberty, been able to accompliſh.

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The univerſe was then at reſt; but that was but a deceitful calm. Man, the prey of his own violent and iniquitous paſſions, experienced within himſelf the moſt cruel diſſention and war: far from God, delivered up to the agitations and frenzies of his own heart; combatted by the multiplicity and the eternal contrariety of his irregular propenſities, he was unable to find peace, becauſe he never ſought it but in the ſource of all his troubles and diſquiets. Philoſophers made a boaſt of being able to beſtow it on their followers; but that univerſal calm of the paſſions which they gave hopes of to their ſage, and which they ſo emphatically announced, might ſuppreſs their ſallies; but it left the whole venom in their heart. It was a peace of pride and oſtentation; it maſked the outward man; but, under that maſk of ceremony, man always knew himſelf to be the ſame.

Jeſus Chriſt comes to-day upon the earth, to bring that true peace to men which the world had never hitherto been able to give them. He comes radically to cure the evil; his divine philoſophy is not confined to the promulgation of pompous precepts, which might be agreeable to reaſon, but which cured not the wounds of the heart; and, as pride, voluptuouſneſs, hatred, and revenge, had been the fatal ſources of all the agitations experienced by the heart of man, he comes to reſtore peace to him, by draining them off, through his grace, his doctrine, and his example.

Yes, my brethren, I ſay that pride had been the original ſource of all the troubles which tore the heart of men. What wars, what frenzies, had that fatal paſſion not lighted upon the earth? With what torrents of blood had it not inundated the univerſe? And what is the hiſtory of nations

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and of empires, of princes and of conquerors, of every age and people, but the hiſtory of thoſe calamities with which pride from the beginning had afflicted men? The entire world was but a gloomy theatre, upon which that haughty and ſenſeleſs paſſion every day exhibited the moſt bloody ſcenes. But the external operations were but a faint image of the troubles which the proud man inwardly experienced. Ambition was a virtue: moderation was looked upon as meanneſs: an individual overthrew his country, overturned the laws and cuſtoms, rendered millions miſerable, in order to uſurp the firſt place among his fellow-citizens; and the ſucceſs of his guilt enſured him every homage; and his name ſtained with the blood of his brethren, acquired only additional luſtre in the public annals which preſerved its memory; and a proſperous villain became the grandeſt character of his age. That paſſion, deſcending among the crowd, became leſs ſtriking; but it was neither leſs animated nor furious: the obſcure was not more at his eaſe than the public man: each wiſhed to carry off the prize from his equals: the orator, the philoſopher, wrangled for, and tore from each other that glory, which, in fact, was the ſole end of all their toils and watchings; and, as the deſires of pride are inſatiable, man, to whom it was then honourable totally to yield himſelf up to it, being unable to reſt in any degree of elevation, was likewiſe incapable of peace and tranquillity. Pride, become the ſole ſource of human honour and glory, was likewiſe become the fatal rock of the quiet and happineſs of men.

The birth of Jeſus Chriſt, by correcting the world of this error, re-eſtabliſhes on the earth that peace which pride had baniſhed from it. He might have manifeſted himſelf to men, with all the marks of ſplendour which the

the prophets attributed to him: he might have assumed the pompous titles of conqueror of Judah, of legislator of the people, of deliverer of Israel; Jerusalem, in these glorious marks, would have recognised him whom she awaited: but Jerusalem, in these titles, saw only a human glory; and Jesus Christ comes to undeceive, and to teach her, that such glory is nothing; that such an expectation had been unworthy of the oracles of so many prophets who had announced him; that the Holy Spirit, which inspired them, could hold out only holiness and eternal riches to men; that all other riches, far from rendering them happy, only increased their evils and crimes; and that his visible ministry was to correspond with the splendid promises, which had, for so many ages, announced him, only by being wholly spiritual, and that he should intend only the salvation of men.

Thus, he is born at Bethlehem, in a poor and abject state; without external state or splendour, he whose birth the songs of all the armies of heaven then celebrated; without title which might distinguish him in the eyes of men, he who was exalted above all principality or power: he suffers his name to be written down among those of the obscurest subjects of Cesar; he whose name was above all other name, and who alone had the right of writing down the names of his chosen in the book of eternity; vulgar and simple shepherds alone came to pay him homage; he, before whom whatever is mighty on the earth, in heaven, and in hell, ought to bend the knee; lastly, whatever can confound human pride is assembled at the spectacle of his birth. If titles, rank, or prosperity had been able to render us happy here below, and to shed peace through our heart, Jesus Christ would have made his appearance clothed in them, and would have brought all these riches

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to his diſciples; but he brings peace to us only by holding them in contempt, and by teaching us to hold them equally in contempt: he comes to render us happy, only by coming to ſuppreſs deſires which hitherto had occaſioned all our diſquiets: he comes to point out to us more ſolid and more durable riches, alone capable of calming our hearts, of filling our deſires, of eaſing our troubles: riches of which man cannot deprive us, and which require only to be loved and to be wiſhed for, to be aſſured of poſſeſſing them.

Neverthelefs, who taſtes of this bleſſed peace? Wars, troubles, frenzies, are they more rare ſince his birth? Are thoſe empires and ſtates which worſhip him, in conſequence more peaceful? Does that pride which he came to deſtroy occaſion leſs commotion and confuſion among men? Alas! Seek among Chriſtians that peace which ought to be their inheritance, and where ſhall you find it? In cities? Pride ſets every thing there in motion; every one wiſhes to ſoar above the rank of his anceſtors: an individual, exalted by fortune, deſtroys the happineſs of thouſands who walks in his ſteps, without being able to attain the ſame point of proſperity. In the circle of domeſtic walls? They conceal only diſtreſſes and cares: and the father of the family, ſolely occupied with the advancement rather than the Chriſtian education of his offspring, leaves to them, for inheritance, his agitations and diſquiets, which they, in their turn, ſhall one day tranſmit to their decendants. In the palaces of kings? But, there it is that a lawleſs and boundleſs ambition gnaws, devours every heart; it is there that, under the ſpecious maſk of joy and tranquillity, the moſt violent and the bittereſt paſſions are nouriſhed; it is there that happineſs apparently reſides, and yet where pride occaſions the greateſt number of diſcon-

tented and miſerable. In the ſanctuary? Alas! there ought ſurely to be found an aſylum of peace; but ambition pervades even the holy place; the efforts there are more to raiſe themſelves above their brethren, than to render themſelves uſeful to them; the holy dignities of the church become, like thoſe of the age, the reward of intrigue and caballing; the religious circumſpection of the prince cannot put a ſtop to ſolicitations and private intrigues; we there ſee the ſame inveteracy in rivalſhips, the ſame ſorrow in conſequence of neglect, the ſame jealouſy towards thoſe who are preferred to us: a miniſtry is boldly canvaſſed for, which ought to be accepted only with fear and trembling: they ſeat themſelve in the temple of God, though placed there by other hands than his: they head the flock without his conſent to whom it belongs, and without his having ſaid, as to Peter, "Feed my ſheep;" and, as they have taken the charge without call and without ability, the flock are led without edification and without fruit, alas! and often with ſhame. O peace of Jeſus Chriſt! which ſurpaſſeſt all ſenſe, ſole remedy againſt the troubles which pride inceſſantly excites in our hearts, who ſhall then be able to give thee to man?

But, ſecondly, if the diſquiets of pride had baniſhed peace from the earth, the impure deſires of the fleſh had not given riſe to fewer troubles. Man forgetting the excellency of his nature, and the ſanctity of his origin, gave himſelf up, like the beaſts, without ſcruple, to the impetuoſity of that brutal inſtinct. Finding it the moſt violent and the moſt univerſal of his propenſities, he believed it to be alſo the moſt innocent and the moſt lawful. In order ſtill more to authoriſe it, he made it part of his worſhip, and formed to himſelf impure gods, in whoſe temples that infamous vice became the only homage which did honour

honour to their altars: even a philoſopher, in other reſpects the wiſeſt of pagans, dreading that marriage ſhould put a kind of check on that deplorable paſſion, had wiſhed to aboliſh that ſacred bond; to permit among men, as among animals, a brutal confuſion, and only multiply the human race through crimes. The more that vice became general, the more it loſt the name of vice; and, nevertheleſs, what a deluge of miſeries had it not poured out upon the earth? With what fury had it not been ſeen to arm people againſt people; kings againſt kings, blood againſt blood; brethren againſt brethren; every where carrying trouble and carnage, and ſhaking the whole univerſe? Ruins of cities, wrecks of the moſt flouriſhing empires, ſceptres and crowns overthrown, became the public and gloomy monuments which every age reared up, in order, it would ſeem, to preſerve, to following ages, the remembrance and the fatal tradition of thoſe calamities with which that vice had afflicted the human race. It became itſelf an inexhauſtible ſource of troubles and anxieties to the man who then gave himſelf up to a boundleſs gratification of it; it held out peace and pleaſure; but jealouſy, exceſs, frenzy, diſguſt, inconſtancy, and black chagrin, continually walked in its ſteps: till then, that the laws, the religion, and the common example authoriſing it, the ſole love of eaſe, even in theſe ages of darkneſs and corruption, kept free from it a ſmall number of ſages.

But that motive was too feeble to check its impetuous courſe, and to extinguiſh its fires in the heart of men: a more powerful remedy was required: and that is, the birth of the Deliverer, who comes to draw men out of that abyſs of corruption, in order to render them pure and without ſtain; to break aſunder thoſe ſhameful bonds, and to give peace to their hearts, by reſtoring to them that freedom

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and innocence of which the ſlavery and tyranny of that vice had deprived them. He is born of a virgin-mother, and the pureſt of all created beings: he thereby gives eſtimation and honour to a virtue unknown to the world, and which even his people conſidered as a reproach. Beſides, in uniting himſelf with us, he becomes our head; incorporates us with himſelf; makes us to become members of his myſtical body; of that body which no longer receives life and influence but from him; of that body whoſe every miniſtry is holy; which is to be ſeated at the right hand of the living God, and to glorify him for ever.

Behold, my brethren, to what height of honour Jeſus Chriſt, in this myſtery, exalts our fleſh; he makes of it the temple of God; the ſanctuary of the holy Spirit; the portion of a body in which the fulneſs of the divinity reſides; the object of the kindneſs and the love of his Father. But do we not ſtill profane this holy temple? Do we not ſtill turn to ſhame the members of Jeſus Chriſt? Do we, in a higher degree, reſpect our fleſh, ſince it is become a holy portion of his myſtical body? Does that ſhameful paſſion not ſtill exerciſe the ſame tyranny over Chriſtians, that is to ſay, over the children of ſanctity and liberty? Does it not ſtill diſturb the peace of the univerſe, the tranquillity of empires, the harmony of families, the order of ſociety, the confidence of marriage, the innocence of ſocial intercourſe, the lot of every individual? Are not the moſt tragical ſpectacles ſtill every day furniſhed to the world by it? Does it reſpect the moſt ſacred ties and the moſt reſpectable character? Does it not reckon as nothing every duty? Does it pay attention even to decency? And does it not turn all ſociety into a frightful confuſion, where cuſtom has effaced every rule? Even you, who liſten to me, from whence have ariſen all the miſeries and unhappineſſes

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of your life, is it not from that deplorable paſſion? Is it not that which has overturned your fortune; which has caſt trouble and diſſention through the heart of your family; which has ſwallowed up the patrimony of your fathers; which has diſhonoured your name; which has ruined your health, and now makes you to drag on a gloomy and diſgraceful life on the earth? Is it not, at leaſt, that which actually rends your heart, at preſent filled with it? What goes on within you but a tumultuous revolution of fears, deſires, jealouſies, miſtruſts, diſguſts, and frenzies? And ſince that paſſion has ſtained your ſoul, have you enjoyed a ſingle moment of peace? Let Jeſus Chriſt again be born within your heart; he alone can be your true peace: chaſe from it the impure ſpirits, and the manſion of your ſoul will be at reſt, become once more a child of grace; innocence is the only ſource of tranquillity.

Laſtly, the birth of Jeſus Chriſt reconciles men to his Father; it reunites the Gentile and the Jew; it deſtroys all thoſe hateful diſtinctions of Greek and Barbarian, of Roman and Scythian; it extinguiſhes all animoſities and hatreds; of all nations it makes only one people; of all his diſciples, only one heart and one ſoul; laſt kind of peace which it brings to men. Formerly they were united together, neither by worſhip, a common hope, nor by the new covenant, which, in an enemy, holds out to us a friend. They conſidered each other almoſt as creatures of a different ſpecies: the diverſity of religions, of manners, of countries, of languages, of intereſts, had, it would appear, as if diverſified in them the ſame nature: ſcarcely did they recogniſe each other by that figure of humanity, which was the only ſign of connection ſtill remaining to them. Like wild beaſts, they mutually exterminated each other; they centered their glory in depopulating the lands of their fellow-

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creatures, and in carrying in triumph their bloody heads as the ſplendid memorials of their victories: it might have been ſaid that they held their exiſtence from different irreconcilable creators, always watchful to deſtroy each other, and who had placed them here below only to revenge their quarrel, and to terminate their diſagreement by the general extinction of one of the two parties; ever diſunited man, and nothing bound them together but intereſt and the paſſions, which were themſelves the ſole ſource of their diviſions and animoſities.

But Jeſus Chriſt is become our peace, our reconciliation, the corner-ſtone which binds and unites the whole fabric, the living head which unites all its members, and makes but one body of the whole. Every thing knits us to him; and whatever knits us to him unites us to each other. It is the ſame Spirit which animates us, the ſame hope which ſuſtains us, the ſame boſom which brings us forth, the ſame fold which aſſembles us, and the ſame Shepherd who conducts us; we are children of the ſame Father, inheritors of the ſame promiſes, citizens of the ſame eternal city, and members of one ſame body.

Now, my brethren, have ſo many ſacred ties been ſucceſsful in binding us together? Chriſtianity, which ought to be but the union of hearts, the tie to knit believers to each other, and Jeſus Chriſt to believers; and which ought to repreſent upon the earth an image of the peace of heaven; Chriſtianity itſelf is no longer but a horrible theatre of troubles and diſſentions: war and fury ſeem to have eſtabliſhed an eternal abode among Chriſtians; religion itſelf, which ought to unite, divides them. The unbeliever, the enemy of Jeſus Chriſt, the children of the falſe prophet, who came to ſpread war and devaſtation through men,

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are in peace; and the children of peace, and diſciples of him who, this day, comes to bring it to men, have their hands continually armed with fire and ſword againſt each other! Kings riſe up againſt kings; nations againſt nations; the ſeas which ſeparate reunite them for their mutual deſtruction; a vile morſel of ſtone arms their fury and revenge; and whole nations go to periſh and bury themſelves under its walls, in conteſting to whom ſhall belong its ruins; the earth is not ſufficiently vaſt to contain them, and to fix them, each one in the bounds which nature herſelf ſeems to have pointed out for ſtates and empires; each wiſhes to uſurp from his neighbour; and a miſerable field of battle, which is ſcarcely ſufficient to ſerve as a burial place to thoſe who have diſputed it, becomes the prize of thoſe rivers of blood with which it is ever ſtained. O divine Reconciliator of men! return then once more upon the earth, ſince the peace which thou broughteſt to it at thy birth ſtill leaves ſo many wars and ſo many calamities in the univerſe!

Nor is this all: that circle itſelf, which unites us under the ſame laws, unites not hearts and affections; hatreds and jealouſies divide citizens equally as they divide nations; animoſities are perpetuated in families, and fathers tranſmit them to their children, as an accurſed inheritance. In vain may the authority of the prince diſarm the hand, it diſarms not the heart; in vain may the ſword be wreſted from them, with the ſword of the tongue they continue a thouſand times more cruel to pierce their enemy; hatred, under the neceſſity of confining itſelf within, becomes deeper and more rancorous, and to forgive is looked upon as a diſhonourable weakneſs. Oh! my brethren, in vain then hath Jeſus Chriſt deſcended upon the earth! He is come to bring peace to us; he hath left it to us as our inheritance; nothing hath he ſo ſtrongly recommended to us as that of loving

loving each other; yet fellowſhip and peace ſeem as if baniſhed from among us, and hatred and animoſity divide court, city, and families; and thoſe whom the offices, the intereſts of the ſtate, decency itſelf, and blood ought, at leaſt, to unite, tear, deſame, would wiſh to deſtroy, and to exalt themſelves on the ruins of each other: and religion which ſhews us our brethren even in our enemies, is no longer liſtened to; and that awful threatening, which gives us room to expect the ſame ſeverity on the part of God which we ſhall have ſhewn to our brethren, no longer touches or affects us; and all theſe motives, ſo capable of ſoftening the heart, ſtill leave it filled with all the bitterneſs of hatred. We tranquilly live in this frightful ſtate: the juſtice of our complaints with regard to our enemies, calms us on the injuſtice of our hatred and of our rooted averſion towards them; and if, on the approach of death, we apparently hold out to them the hand of reconciliation, it is not that we love them more, it is becauſe the expiring heart hath no longer the force to ſuſtain its hatred, that almoſt all our feelings are extinguiſhed, or, at leaſt, that we are no longer capable of feeling any thing but our own weakneſs and our approaching diſſolution. Let us then unite ourſelves to the newly born Jeſus Chriſt; let us enter into the ſpirit of that myſtery; with him let us render to God that glory which is his due; it is the only mean of reſtoring to ourſelves that peace, of which our paſſions have hitherto deprived us.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

FOR THE DAY OF THE EPIPHANY.

MATTHEW ii. 2.

For we have ſeen his ſtar in the eaſt, and we are come to worſhip him.

TRUTH, that light of Heaven figured by the ſtar which on this day appears to the magi, is the only thing here below worthy of the cares and the reſearches of man. It alone is the light of our mind, the rule of our heart, the ſource of ſolid joys, the foundation of our hopes, the conſolation of our fears, the alleviation of our evils, the cure for all our afflictions: it alone is the refuge of the good conſcience, and the terror of the bad; the inward puniſhment of vice, the internal recompenſe of virtue: it alone immortaliſes thoſe who have loved it, and renders illuſtrious the chains of thoſe who ſuffer for it, attracts public honours to the aſhes of its martyrs and defenders, and beſtows reſpectability on the abjection and the poverty of thoſe who have quitted all to follow it: laſtly, it alone inſpires magnanimous thoughts, forms heroical men, ſouls of whom the world is unworthy, ſages alone worthy of that name. All our attentions ought therefore to be confined to know it; all our talents to manifeſt it; all our zeal to defend it: in men we ought then to look only for truth, to have no wiſh of pleaſing them but by truth, to eſteem in them only truth, and

to be reſolved that they ſhall never pleaſe us but by it: in a word, it would appear that it ſhould have only to ſhew itſelf, as on this day to the magi, to be loved; and that it ſhews us to ourſelves in order to teach us to know ourſelves.

Nevertheleſs, it is aſtoniſhing what different impreſſions the ſame truth makes upon men. To ſome it is a light which directs the ſteps, and, in pointing out their duty, renders it amiable to them: to others it is a troubleſome light, and, as it were, a kind of dazzling, which vexes and fatigues them: laſtly, to many it is a thick miſt which irritates, inflames them with rage, and completes their blindneſs. It is the ſame ſtar which, on this day, appears in the firmament: the magi ſee it; the prieſts of Jeruſalem know that it is foretold in the prophets; Herod can no longer doubt that it hath appeared, ſeeing wiſe men come from the extremities of the eaſt, to ſeek, guided by its light, the new King of the Jews. Nevertheleſs, how diſſimilar are the diſpoſitions with which they receive the ſame truth manifeſted to them.

In the magi it finds a docile and ſincere heart: in the prieſts, a heart mean, deceitful, cowardly, and diſſembling: in Herod, a corrupted and hardened heart. Conſequently, it forms worſhippers in the magi; diſſemblers in the prieſts; and in Herod a perſecutor. Now, my brethren, ſuch is ſtill at preſent among us the lot of truth: it is a celeſtial light which is ſhown to us, ſays St. Auguſtin: but few receive it, many hide and dim it, and a ſtill greater number contemn and perſecute it: it ſhews itſelf to all; but how many indocile ſouls who reject it? How many mean and cowardly ſouls who diſſemble it? How many black and hardened hearts who oppreſs and perſecute it? Let us col-

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left theſe three marked characters in our goſpel, which are to inſtruct us in all our duties relative to truth: truth received, truth diſſembled, truth perſecuted. Holy Spirit, Spirit of Truth, deſtroy in us the ſpirit of the world, that ſpirit of error, of diſſimulation, of hatred againſt the truth; and in this holy place deſtined to form miniſters, who are to announce it even in the extremities of the earth, render us worthy of loving the truth, of manifeſting it to thoſe who know it not, and of ſuffering all for its ſake.

PART I. I call truth that eternal rule, that internal light inceſſantly preſent within us, which, in every action, points out to us what we ought, and what we ought not to do; which enlightens our doubts; which judges our judgments; which inwardly condemns or approves us, accordingly as our behaviour is agreeable or contrary to its light; and which, in certain moments more ſplendid and bright, more evidently points out to us the way in which we ought to walk, and is figured to us by that miraculous light which, on this day, conducts the magi to Jeſus Chriſt.

Now, I ſay that, the firſt uſe which we ought to make of truth being for ourſelves, the church, on this day, propoſes to us, in the conduct of the magi, a model of thoſe diſpoſitions which alone can render the knowledge of truth beneficial and ſalutary to us. There are few ſouls, however they may be plunged in the ſenſes and in the paſſions, whoſe eyes are not, at times, opened upon the vanity of the intereſts they purſue, upon the grandeur of the hopes which they ſacrifice, and upon the ignominy of the life which they lead. But, alas! their eyes are opened to the light, only to be cloſed again in an inſtant; and the ſole fruit which they reap, from the fruit which is viſible to, and enlightens them, is that of adding to the misfortune

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of having hitherto been ignorant of it, the guilt of having afterwards known it in vain.

Some confine themſelves to vain reaſonings upon the light which ſtrikes them, and turn truth into a ſubject of controverſy and vain philoſophy; others, with minds yet unſettled, wiſh, it would appear, to know it; but they ſeek it not in an effectual way, becauſe they would, at bottom, be heartily ſorry to have found it: laſtly, others, more tractable, allow themſelves to be wrought upon by its evidence; but, diſcouraged by the difficulties and the ſelf-denials which it preſents to them, they receive it not with that delight and that gratitude which, when once known, it inſpires. And behold the rocks, which the diſpoſitions of the ſages of the eaſt towards that light of Heaven, which comes to ſhew new routs to them, teach us to ſhun.

Accuſtomed, in conſequence of a public profeſſion of wiſdom and philoſophy, to inveſtigate every thing, and reduce it to the judgment of a vain reaſon, and to be far above all popular prejudices, they ſtop not, however, before commencing their journey upon the celeſtial light, to examine if the appearance of this new ſtar might not be ſolved by natural cauſes; they do not aſſemble from every quarter ſcientific men, in order to reaſon on an event ſo uncommon; they ſacrifice no time to vain difficulties, which generally ariſe, more from the repugnance we feel to truth, than from a ſincere deſire of enlightening ourſelves, and of knowing it. Inſtructed by that tradition of their fathers which the captive Iſraelites had formerly carried into the eaſt, and which Daniel and ſo many other prophets had announced there, relative to the Star of Jacob which ſhould one day appear, they, at once, comprehended it, that the

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vain reflections of the human mind have no connection with the light of Heaven; that the portion of light which Heaven ſhews them is ſufficient to determine and to conduct them; that grace always leaves obſcurities in the ways to which it calls us, in order not to deprive faith of the merit of ſubmiſſion; and that, whenever we are ſo happy as to catch a ſingle gleam of truth, the uprightneſs of the heart ought to ſupply whatever deficiency may yet remain in the evidence of the light.

Nevertheleſs, how many ſouls in the world, wavering upon faith, or rather enſlaved by paſſions which render doubtful to them that truth which condemns them; how many ſouls, thus floating, clearly ſee, that, at bottom, the religion of our fathers hath marks of truth which the moſt high-flown and proudeſt reaſon would not dare to deny to it; that unbelief leads to too much; that, after all, we muſt hold to ſomething; and, that total unbelief is a party ſtill more incomprehenſible to reaſon than the myſteries which ſhock it; who ſee it, and who ſtruggle, by endleſs diſputes, to lull that worm of the conſcience which inceſſantly reproaches their error and their folly; who reſiſt that truth, which proves itſelf in the bottom of their heart, under pretence of enlightening themſelves; who apply for advice only that they may ſay to themſelves, that their doubts are unanſwerable; who have recourſe to the moſt learned, only to have the power of alledging, as a freſh motive of unbelief, the having had recourſe in vain? It would ſeem that religion is no longer but a matter of diſcourſe; it is no longer conſidered as that important affair in which not a moment is to be loſt; it is a ſimple matter of controverſy, as formerly in the Areſpagus; it fills up the idle time; it is one of thoſe unimportant queſtions which fill

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up the vacancies of converſation, and amuſe the langour and the vanity of general intercourſe.

But, my brethren, "the kingdom of God cometh not "with obſervation." Truth is not the fruit of controverſy and diſpute, but of tears and groanings; it is by purifying our heart in meditation and in prayer that we alone muſt expect, like the magi, the light of Heaven, and to become worthy of diſtinguiſhing and knowing it. A corrupted heart, ſays St. Auguſtin, may ſee the truth; but he is incapable of reliſhing or of loving it; in vain do you enlighten and inſtruct yourſelves; your doubts are in your paſſions: religion will become evident and clear from the moment that you ſhall become chaſte, temperate, and equitable; and you will have faith from the moment that you ſhall ceaſe to have vice. Conſequently, from the inſtant that you ceaſe to have an intereſt in finding religion falſe, you will find it inconteſtable; no longer hate its maxims, and you will no longer conteſt its myſteries.

Auguſtin himſelf, already convinced of the truth of the goſpel, ſtill found in the love of pleaſure, a ſource of doubts and perplexities which checked him. It was no longer the dreams of the Manicheans which kept him removed from faith; he was fully ſenſible of their abſurdity and fanaticiſm; it was no longer the pretended contradictions of our holy books; Ambroſe had explained their purport and their adorable myſteries. Nevertheleſs, he ſtill doubted; the ſole thought of having to renounce his ſhameful paſſions in becoming a diſciple of faith, rendered it ſtill ſuſpicious to him. He would have wiſhed either that the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt had been an impoſition, or that it had not condemned his voluptuous exceſſes, without which,

which, indeed he was then unable to comprehend how either an happy or a comfortable life could be led. Thus, always floating and unwilling to be ſettled; continually conſulting, yet dreading to be inſtructed, by turns the diſciple and admirer of Ambroſe, and racked by the perplexities of a heart which ſhunned the truth, he dragged his chains, as he ſays himſelf, dreading to be delivered from it, he continued to ſtart doubts merely to prolong his paſſions, he wiſhed to be yet more enlightened, becauſe he dreaded to be it too much; and, more the ſlave of his paſſion than of his errors, he rejected truth, which manifeſted itſelf to him, merely becauſe he looked upon it as a victorious and irreſiſtible hand which was at laſt come to break aſunder thoſe fetters which he ſtill loved. The light of Heaven finds, therefore, no doubts to diſſipate in the minds of the magi, becauſe it finds no paſſion in their hearts to overcome; and they well deſerve to be the firſt-fruits of the gentiles, and the firſt diſciples of that faith which was to ſubjugate all nations to the goſpel.

Not but it is often neceſſary to add, to our own light, the approbation of thoſe who are eſtabliſhed to diſtinguiſh, whether it be the right ſpirit which moves us; fallacy is ſo ſimilar to truth, that it is not eaſy to avoid being ſometimes deceived. Thus the magi, in order to be more ſurely confirmed in the truth of the prodigy which guides their ſteps, come ſtraight to Jeruſalem: they conſult the prieſts and the ſcribes, as the only perſons capable of diſcovering to them that truth which they ſeek; they boldly and openly demand, in the midſt of that great city, "where is he that is "born King of the Jews?" They propoſe their queſtion with no palliations, calculated to attract an equivocal anſwer: they are determined to be enlightened, and wiſh not

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to be flattered; from their heart they ſeek the truth, and, for that reaſon, they find it.

New diſpoſition, ſufficiently rare among belivers. Alas! we find not truth, becauſe we never ſeek it with a ſincere and upright heart: we diffuſe a kind of miſt over every attempt to find it, which conceals it from our view: we conſult, but we place our paſſions in ſo favourable a light, we hold them out in colours ſo ſoftened, and ſo ſimilar to the truth, that we procure a reply of its being really ſo: we wiſh not to be inſtructed; we wiſh to be deceived, and to add, to the paſſion which enſlaves us, an authority which may calm us.

Such is the illuſion of the majority of men, and frequently even of thoſe who become contrite, have quitted the errors of a worldly life. Yes, my brethren let us ſearch our own hearts, and we ſhall find, that, however, ſincere our converſion may otherwiſe be, yet there is always within us ſome particular point, ſome ſecret and priviledged attachment, upon which we are not candid; upon which we never but very imperfectly inſtruct the guide of our conſcience; upon which we ſeek not with ſincerity the truth; upon which, in a word, it would even grieve us to have found: and from thence it is, that the weakneſſes of the pious and good always furniſh ſo many traits to the deriſion of the worldly; from thence, we attract upon virtue continual reproaches and cenſures, which ought to light only upon ourſelves. Nevertheleſs, to hear us ſpeak, we love the truth; we are deſirous of having it ſhown to us. But a convincing proof, of that being only a vain mode of ſpeaking, is, that whatever concerns, or has any alluſion to this cheriſhed paſſion,

ſion, is carefully avoided by all around us; our friends are ſilent upon it; our ſuperiors are obliged to uſe an artful delicacy, not to injure our feelings; our inferiors are upon their guard, and employ continual precautions; we are never ſpoken to, but with lenitives which draw a veil over our ſore; we are almoſt the only perſons ignorant of our defect: the whole world ſees it, yet no one has the courage to make it known to ourſelves: it is clearly ſeen that we ſeek not with ſincerity the truth; and that, far from curing us, the hand which ſhould dare to probe our ſore, would only ſucceed in making a freſh one.

David knew not, and reſpected not the ſanctity of Nathan, till after that prophet had ſpoken to him, with ſincerity, of the ſcandal of his conduct; from that day, and ever afterwards, he conſidered him as his father and deliverer; but, with us, a perſon loſes all his merit from the moment that he has forced us to know ourſelves. Before that, he was enlightened, prudent, full of charity; he poſſeſſed every talent calculated to attract eſteem and confidence; the John the Baptiſts were liſtened to with pleaſure, as formerly by an inceſtuous king: but, from the moment that they have undiſguiſedly ſpoken to us, from the moment that they have ſaid to us; "It is "not lawful for thee," they are ſtripped, in our opinion, of all their grand qualities; their zeal is no longer but whim; their charity but an oſtentation, or a deſire to cenſure and contradict: their piety but an imprudence or a cheat, with which they cover their pride; their truth but a miſtaken phantom. Thus, frequently convinced in our own minds of the iniquity of our paſſions, we would wiſh others to give them their approbation; forced, by the inward teſtimony of the truth, to reproach them to ourſelves, we cannot endure that they ſhould be mentioned to us by

others: we are hurt and irritated that others ſhould join us againſt ourſelves. Like Saul, we exact of the Samuels, that they approve, in public, what we inwardly condemn; and, through a corruption of the heart, perhaps more deplorable than our paſſions themſelves, unable to ſilence truth in the bottom of our heart, we would wiſh to extinguiſh it in the hearts of all who approach us. I was right, therefore, in ſaying, that we all make a boaſt of loving the truth, but that few court it, like the magi, with an upright and ſincere heart.

Thus, the little attention which they pay to the difficulties, which ſeemed to diſſuade them from that reſearch, is a freſh proof of its ſincerity and heartineſs. For, my brethren, how ſingular muſt not this extraordinary ſtep, which grace propoſed to them, have at firſt appeared to their mind. They alone, of all their nation, among ſo many ſages and learned men, without regard to friends and connections, in ſpite of public obſervations and deriſions, while all others either contemn this miraculous ſtar, or conſider the attention paid to it, and the deſign of theſe three ſages, as an abſurd undertaking, and a popular weakneſs, unworthy of their mind and knowledge, they alone declare againſt the common opinion; they alone entruſt themſelves to the new guide which Heaven ſends them: they alone abandon their country and their children, and reckon, as nothing, a ſingularity, the neceſſity and wiſdom of which the celeſtial light diſcloſes to them.

Laſt inſtruction. The cauſe, my brethren, of truth being always unavailingly ſhewn to us, is, that we judge not of it by the lights which it leaves in our ſoul, but by the impreſſion which it makes on the reſt of men with whom we live: we never conſult the truth in our heart; we

we conſult only the opinions which others have of it. Thus, in vain doth the light of Heaven a thouſand times intrude upon us, and point out the ways in which we ought to go; the very firſt glance which we afterwards caſt upon the example of others who live like us, revives us, and ſpreads a freſh miſt over our heart. In thoſe fortunate moments when we conſult the ſole truth of our own conſcience, we condemn ourſelves; we tremble over a futurity; we promiſe to ourſelves a new life; yet, a moment after, when returned to the world, and no longer conſulting but the general example, we juſtify ourſelves, and regain that falſe ſecurity wich we had loſt. We have no confidence in the truth which the common example diſproves; we ſacrifice it to error and to the public opinion; it becomes ſuſpicious to us, becauſe it has choſen out us alone to favour with its light, and the very ſingularity of the bleſſing is the cauſe of our ingratitude and oppoſition. We cannot comprehend, that, to work out our ſalvation, is to diſtinguiſh ourſelves from the reſt of men; is to live ſingle amidſt the multitude; is to be an individual ſupporter of our own cauſe, in the midſt of a world which either condemns or deſpiſes us; is, in a word, to count examples as nothing, and to be affected by our duty alone. We cannot comprehend, that, to devote ourſelves to deſtruction, it requires us to live only as others do; to conform to the multitude; to form with it only one body and one world; ſeeing the world is already judged; that it is that body of the antichriſt which ſhall periſh with its head and members; that criminal city, accurſed and condemned to an eternal anathema. Yes, my brethren, the greateſt obſtacles in our hearts, to grace and truth, is the public opinion. How many timid ſouls, who have not the courage to adopt the righteous ſide, merely becauſe the world, to whoſe view they are expoſed, would join againſt them? Thus, the king

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of Aſſyria durſt not declare himſelf for the God of Daniel, becauſe the grandees of his court would have reprobated ſuch a ſtep. How many weak ſouls, who, diſguſted with pleaſures, only continue to purſue them through a falſe honour, and that they may not diſtinguiſh themſelves from thoſe who ſet an example of them? Thus, Aaron, in the midſt of the Iſraelites, danced around the golden calf, and joined them in offering up incenſe to the idol which he deteſted, becauſe he had not the courage, ſingly, to reſiſt the public error and blindneſs. Fools that we are! it is the ſole example of the public which confirms us againſt truth; as if men were our truth, or that it were upon the earth, and not in heaven, that we ought like the magi, to ſearch for that rule and that light which are to guide us.

It is true, that, frequently, it is not reſpect for the world's opinion, but the ſufferings and ſelf-denials it holds out to us, which extinguiſh truth in our heart: thus, it makes us ſorrowful like that young man of the goſpel, and who do not receive it with that delight teſtified by the magi on ſeeing the miraculous ſtar. They had beheld the magnificence of Jeruſalem, the pomp of its buildings, the majeſty of its temple, the ſplendour and grandeur of Herod's court; but the goſpel makes no mention of their having been affected by that vain diſplay of human pomp: they beheld all theſe grand objects of deſire without attention, pleaſure, or any exterior marks of admiration or ſurpriſe; they expreſs no wiſh to view the treaſures and the riches of the temple, as thoſe ambaſſadors from Babylon formerly did to Hezekiah: ſolely taken up with the light of Heaven manifeſted to them, they have no eyes for any earthly object; feeling to the truth alone which has enlightened them, every thing elſe is an object of indifference, or a burden to them; and their heart, viewing all things in their proper light

light no longer acknowledges either delight, intereſt, or conſolation to be found in any thing but the truth.

On our part, my brethren, the firſt rays of truth which the goodneſs of God ſhed on our heart, probably excited a ſenſible delight. The project which we at firſt formed of a new life; the novelty of the lights which ſhone upon us, and upon which we had not as yet fully opened our eyes; the laſſitude itſelf, and diſguſt of thoſe paſſions of which our heart now felt only the bitterneſs, and the puniſhment; the novelty of the occupations which we propoſed to ourſelves in a change; all theſe offering ſmiling images to our fancy; for novelty itſelf is pleaſing: but this, as the goſpel ſays, was only the joy of a ſeaſon. In proportion as truth drew near, it aſſumed to us, as to Auguſtin yet a ſinner, an appearance leſs captivating and ſmiling. When, after our firſt glance, as I may ſay, of it, we had leiſurely and minutely examined the various duties it preſcribed to us; the grievous ſeparations which were now to be a law to us; retirement, prayer, the ſelf-denials which it proved to be indiſpenſible; that ſerious, occupied and private life in which we were to be engaged: ah! we immediately, like the young man of the goſpel, began to draw back ſorrowful and uneaſy: all our paſſions rouſed up freſh obſtacles to it; every thing now preſented itſelf in gloomy and totally different colours; and that which we had at firſt thought to be ſo attractive, when brought near, was no longer in our eyes but a frightful object, a way rugged, terrifying, and impracticable to human weakneſs.

Where are the ſouls, who, like the magi, after having once known the truth, never afterwards wiſh to ſee but it alone; have no longer eyes for the world, for its empty pleaſures, or for the vanity of its pompous ſhews; who feel

feel no delight but in the contemplation of truth; in making it their reſource in every affliction; the ſpur of their indolence; their ſuccour againſt temptation; and the pureſt delight of their ſoul? And how vain, puerile, and diſguſting doth the world, with all its pleaſures, hopes, and grandeurs, indeed appear to a ſoul who hath known thee, O my God! and who hath felt the truth of thine eternal promiſes; to a ſoul who feels that whatever is not thee is unworthy of him; and who conſiders the earth only as the country of thoſe who muſt periſh forever! Nothing is conſolatory to him but what opens the proſpect of real and laſting riches; nothing appears worthy of his regard but what is to endure for ever; nothing has the power of pleaſing him but what ſhall eternally pleaſe him; nothing is longer capable of attaching him but that which he is no more to loſe; and all the trifling objects of vanity are no longer on his part, but the embarraſſments of his piety, or gloomy monuments which recal the remembrance of his crimes.

Behold, in the inſtance of the magi, truth received with ſubmiſſion, with ſincerity, and with delight; in the conduct of the prieſts let us ſee the truth diſſembled; and, after being inſtructed in the uſe which we ought to make of truth with regard to ourſelves, let us learn what is our duty, reſpecting it, to others.

PART II. The firſt duty required of us by the law of charity towards our brethren, is the duty of truth. We are not bound to beſtow on all men our attentions, our cares, and our officious ſervices; to all we owe the truth. The different ſituations in which rank and birth place us in the world, diverſify our duties with regard to our fellow-creatures; in every ſituation of life that of truth is the ſame. We owe it to the great equally as to the humble; to our

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ſubjects as to our maſters; to the lovers of it as to thoſe who hate it; to thoſe who mean to employ it againſt ourſelves as to thoſe who wiſh it only for their own benefit. There are conjunctures in which prudence permits to hide and to diſſemble the love which we bear for our brethren; none can poſſibly exiſt in which we are permitted to diſſemble the truth: in a word, truth is not our own property, we are only its witneſſes, its defenders, and its depoſitaries. It is that ſpark, that light of God which ſhould illuminate the whole world; and, when we diſſemble or obſcure it, we are unjuſt towards our brethren, and ungrateful towards the Father of Light who hath ſpread it through our ſoul.

Nevertheleſs, the world is filled with diſſemblers of the truth; we live it would appear, only to deceive each other; and ſociety, the firſt bond which ought to be truth, is no longer but a commerce of diſſimulation, duplicity, and cunning. Now, in the conduct of the prieſts of our goſpel, let us view all the different kinds of diſſimulation of which men render themſelves every day culpable towards truth; we ſhall there find a diſſimulation of ſilence, a diſſimulation of compliance and palliation, a diſſimulation of diſguiſe and falſehood.

A diſſimulation of ſilence. Conſulted by Herod on the place in which the Chriſt was to be born, they made anſwer, it is true that Bethlehem was the place marked in the prophets for that fulfilment of that grand event; but they add not, that the ſtar foretold in the holy books, having at laſt appeared, and the kings of Saba and of Arabia coming with preſents to worſhip the new chief who was to lead Iſrael, it was no longer to be doubted that the overſhadowed had at laſt brought forth the righteous. They do not gather together

together the people in order to announce this bleſſed intelligence; they do not run the firſt to Bethlehem, in order, by their example, to animate Jeruſalem. Wrapt up in their criminal timidity, they guard a profound ſilence; they iniquitouſly retain the truth; and, while ſtrangers come from the extremities of the eaſt loudly to proclaim in Jeruſalem that the King of the Jews is born, the prieſts, the ſcribes are ſilent, and ſacrifice, to the ambition of Herod, the intereſts of truth, the deareſt hope of their nation, and the honour of their miniſtry.

What a ſhameful degradation of the miniſters of truth! The good-will of the prince influences them more than the ſacred depoſit of the religion with which they are intruſted; the luſtre of the throne ſtifles, in their heart, the light of Heaven; by a criminal ſilence they flatter a king who applies to them for the truth, and who can learn it from them alone; they confirm him in error by concealing that which might have undeceived him; and how, indeed ſhall truth ever make its way to the ear of ſovereigns, if even the Lord's annointed, who ſurround the throne have not the courage to announce it, but join their efforts, with thoſe who dwell in courts, to conceal and ſtifle it?

But this duty, my brethren, is, in certain reſpects, common to you as to us; yet, nevertheleſs, there are few perſons in the world, even of thoſe who ſet an example of piety, who do not, almoſt every day, render themſelves culpable towards their brethren of the diſſimulation of ſilence. They think that they render to truth all that they owe to it, when they do not declare againſt it; when they hear virtue continually decried by the worldly, the doctrine of the world maintained, its abuſes and maxims juſtified, thoſe of goſpel oppoſed or weakened, the wicked often

blaſpheming

blaſpheming what they know not, and ſetting themſelves up as judges of that faith which ſhall judge them; that they liſten to them, I ſay, without joining in their impiety, is true, but they do not boldly ſhew their diſapprobation, and content themſelves with merely not authoriſing their blaſphemies or their prejudices by their ſuffrage.

Now, I ſay that, being all individually intruſted with the intereſts of truth, to be ſilent when it is openly attacked in our preſence, is to become, in a meaſure, its perſecutor and adverſary. But, I add, that you, above all whom God hath enlightened, you then fail in that love which you owe to your brethren, ſeeing your obligations with regard to them augment in proportion to the grace with which God hath favoured you; you alſo render yourſelves culpable towards God of ingratitude; you do not make a proper return for the bleſſing of grace and of truth with which he hath favoured you, in the midſt of your extravagant paſſions. He hath illuminated your darkneſs; he hath recalled you to himſelf, while wandering in treacherous and iniquitous ways; he, no doubt, in thus ſhedding light through your heart, hath not had your benefit alone in view! he hath meant that it ſhould operate as the inſtruction or as the reproach of your connections, your friends, your ſubjects, or your maſters; he hath intended to favour your age, your nation, your country, in favouring you; for his choſen are formed only for the ſalvation or the condemnation of ſinners. His deſign has been to place in you a light which might ſhine amid the ſurrounding darkneſs, and be a ſalutary guide to your fellow-creatures; which might perpetuate truth among men, and render teſtimony to the righteouſneſs and to the wiſdom of his law, amidſt all the prejudices, and all the vain concluſions of a profane world.

Now, by oppoſing only a cowardly and timid ſilence to the maxims which attack the truth, you do not enter into the views of God's mercy upon your brethren; you render unavailing to his glory and to the aggrandiſement of his kingdom, that talent of the truth which he had intruſted to you, and of which he will one day demand a particular and ſevere reckoning; I ſay, more particularly of you who had formerly with ſo much eclat, ſupported the errors and profane maxims of the world, and who had once been its firmeſt and moſt avowed apologiſt. He ſurely had a right to exact of you, that you ſhould declare yourſelves with the ſame courage in favour of truth; nevertheleſs, from a zealous partiſan of the world, his grace hath only ſucceeded in making a timid diſciple of the goſpel. That grand air of confidence and of intrepidity with which you formerly apologized for the paſſions, has forſaken you ever ſince you have undertaken the defence of the interefts of virtue; that audacity which once impoſed ſilence on truth, is now itſelf mute in the preſence of error; and truth, which, as St. Auguſtin ſays, gives confidence and intrepidity to all who have it on their ſide, has rendered you only weak and timid.

I admit, that there is a time to be ſilent as well as a time to ſpeak; and that the zeal of truth hath its rules and meaſures; but I would not that the ſouls who know God and ſerve him continually, hear the maxims of religion ſubverted, the reputation of their brethren attacked, the moſt criminal abuſes of the world juſtified, without having the courage to adopt the cauſe of that truth which they diſhonour. I would not that the world have its avowed partiſans, and that Jeſus Chriſt have no one to ſtand up for him. I would not that the pious and good, through a miſtaken idea of good-breeding, diſſemble upon

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thoſe irregularities of ſinners which they are daily witneſſing; while ſinners on the contrary, conſider it as giving themſelves an important and faſhionable air, to defend and to maintain them in their preſence. I would that a faithful ſoul comprehend that he is reſponſible to the truth alone; that he is upon the earth ſolely to render glory to the truth: I would that he bear upon his countenance that noble and, I may ſay, lofty dignity, which grace inſpires; that heroical candour which contempt of the world and its glory produces; that generous and Chriſtian liberty, which expects only eternal riches, which has no hope but in God, which dreads nothing but the internal Judge, which pays court to, and ſpares nothing but the intereſts of righteouſneſs and of charity, and which has no wiſh of making itſelf agreeable but by the truth. I would that the ſole preſence of a righteouſneſs ſoul impoſe ſilence on the enemies of virtue; that they reſpect that character of truth which he ſhould bear engraven on his forehead; that they crouch under his holy greatneſs of ſoul, and that they render homage, at leaſt by their ſilence and confuſion, to that virtue which they inwardly deſpiſe. Thus, the Iſraelites, taken up with their dances, their profane rejoicings, and their fooliſh and impious ſhouts around the golden calf, ſtop all in a moment, and keep a profound ſilence on the ſole appearance of Moſes, who comes down from the mountain, armed with the law of the Lord and with his eternal truth. Firſt diſſimulation of the truth: a diſſimulation of ſilence.

The ſecond manner in which it is diſſembled, is that of ſoftening it by modifications, and by condeſcenſions which injure it. The magi, no doubt, could not be ignorant that the intelligence which they came to announce to Jeruſalem would be highly diſpleaſing to Herod. That foreigner,

foreigner, through his artifices, had ſeated himſelf on the throne of David; he did not ſo peaceably enjoy the fruit of his uſurpation, but that he conſtantly had a dread leſt ſome heir of the blood of the kings of Judah ſhould expel him from the heritage of his fathers, and remount a throne promiſed to his poſterity. With what eye muſt he then regard men who come to publiſh, in the midſt of Jeruſalem; that the King of the Jews is born, and to proclaim him to a people ſo attached to, and ſo zealous for the blood of David, and ſo impatient under every foreign rule? Nevertheleſs, the magi conceal nothing of what they had ſeen in the eaſt; they do not ſoften that grand event by meaſured expreſſions leſs proper to arouſe the jealouſy of Herod. They might have called the Meſſiah whom they ſeek, the Meſſenger of Heaven, or the longed-for of nations; they might have deſigned him by titles leſs hateful to the ambition of Herod; but, full of the truth which hath appeared to them, they know none of theſe timid and ſervile time-ſervings; perſuaded that thoſe, who are determined to receive the truth only through the means of their errors, are unworthy of knowing it. They are unacquainted with the art of covering it with diſguiſes and conſiderations for individuals, which diſhonour it: they boldly come to the point, and demand, "where is he that is born King of the "Jews:" and, not ſatisfied with conſidering him as the Sovereign of Judea, they declare that heaven itſelf is his birth-right; that the ſtars are his, and make their appearance in the firmament only in obedience to his orders.

The prieſts and the ſcribes, on the contrary, forced, by the evidence of the ſcriptures, to render glory to the truth, ſoften it by guarded expreſſions. They endeavour to unite that reſpect which they owe to the truth, with that complaiſance which they wiſh ſtill to preſerve for Herod: they

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ſuppreſs the title of king which the magi had given to him, and which had ſo often been beſtowed by the prophets upon the Meſſiah; they deſign him by a title which might equally mark an authority of doctrine, or of ſuperior power: they announce him rather a legiſlator eſtabliſhed to regulate the manners, than as a ſovereign raiſed up for the deliverance of his people from bondage. And, notwithſtanding that they themſelves expect a Meſſiah, King, and Conqueror, they ſoften the truth which they wiſh to announce, and complete the blindneſs of Herod, with whom they temporiſe.

Deplorable deſtiny of the great! the lips of the prieſts quiver in ſpeaking to them; from the moment that their paſſions are known they are temporiſed with; truth never offers itſelf to them but with a double face, of which one ſide is always favourable to them; the ſervants of God wiſh not avowedly to betray their miniſtry and the intereſts of truth; but they wiſh to conciliate them with their own intereſt: they endeavour to ſave, as it were, both the rule and their paſſions, as if the paſſions could ſubſiſt with that rule which condemns them. It ſeldom happens that the great are inſtructed, becauſe it ſeldom happens that the intention is not to pleaſe in inſtructing them. Nevertheleſs, the greater part would love the truth were it once known to them: the paſſions and the extravagancies of the age, nouriſhed by all the pleaſures which ſurround them, may lead them aſtray; but a remaining principle of religion renders truth always reſpectable to them. We may venture to ſay, that ignorance condemns more princes and perſons of high rank than people of the loweſt condition; and, that the mean complaiſance which is paid to them, is more diſhonourable to the miniſtry, and is the cauſe of

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more reproach to religion, than the moſt notorious ſcandals which afflict the church.

The conduct of theſe prieſts appears baſe to you, my brethren: but, if you are diſpoſed to enter into judgment with yourſelves, and to follow yourſelves through the detail of your duties, of your friendſhips, of your converſations, you will ſee that all your diſcourſes, and all your proceedings, are merely mollifications of the truth, and temporiſings in order to reconcile it with the prejudices, or the paſſions of thoſe with whom it is your lot to live. We never hold out the truth to them but in a point of view in which it may pleaſe; in their moſt deſpicable vices we always find ſome favourable ſide; and, as all the paſſions have always ſome apparent reſemblance to ſome virtue, we never fail to ſave ourſelves through the aſſiſtance of that reſemblance.

Thus, in the preſence of an ambitious perſon, we never fail to hold forth the love of glory, and the deſire of exalting one's ſelf, only as tendencies which give birth to great men; we flatter his pride; we inflame his deſires with hopes and with falſe and chimerical predictions; we nouriſh the error of his imagination by bringing phantoms within his reach, upon which he inceſſantly feaſts himſelf. We perhaps venture, in general terms, to pity men who intereſt themſelves ſo deeply for things which chance alone beſtows, and of which death ſhall perhaps deprive us to-morrow; but we have not the courage to cenſure the madman who, to that vapour, ſacrifices his quiet, his life, and his conſcience. With a vindictive perſon we juſtify his reſentment and anger; we juſtify his guilt in his mind, by countenancing the juſtice of his accuſations; we ſpare his

paſſion

paſſion in exaggerating the injury and fault of his enemy. We perhaps venture to ſay, how noble it is to forgive; but we have not the courage to add, that the firſt ſtep towards forgiveneſs is the ceaſing to ſpeak of the injury received.

With a courtier equally diſcontented with his own fortune, and jealous of that of others, we never fail to expoſe his rivals in the moſt unfavourable light: we artfully ſpread a cloud over their merit and their glory, leaſt they ſhould injure the jealous eyes of him who liſtens to us; we diminiſh, we caſt a ſhade over the fame of their talents and of their ſervices; and, by our iniquitous crouchings to his paſſion, we nouriſh it, we aſſiſt him in blinding himſelf, and induce him to conſider, as honours unjuſtly raviſhed from himſelf, all thoſe which are beſtowed upon his brethren. What ſhall I ſay? With a prodigal, his profuſions are no longer in our mouths, but a diſplay of generoſity and magnificence. With a miſer, his ſordid callouſneſs of heart, in which every feeling is loſt, is no longer but a prudent moderation, and a laudable domeſtic economy. With a perſon of high rank, his prejudices and his errors always find in us ready apologies; we reſpect his paſſions equally as his authority, and his prejudices always become our own. Laſtly, we catch the infection, and imbibe the errors of all with whom we live; we transform ourſelves, as I may ſay, into otherſelves; our grand ſtudy is to find out their weakneſſes, that we may appropriate and apply them to our own purpoſes; we have, in fact, no language of our own; we always ſpeak the language of others; our diſcourſes are merely a repetition of their prejudices; and this infamous debaſement of truth we call knowledge of the world, a prudence which knows its own intereſt, the grand art of pleaſing and of ſucceeding in the world. "O ye ſons of men! how long will ye love vani-
"ty, and ſeek after leaſing?" Yes,

Yes, my brethren, by that we perpetuate error among men; we authoriſe every deceit; we juſtify every falſe maxim; we give an air of innocence to every vice; we maintain the reign of the world, and of its doctrine, againſt that of Jeſus Chriſt; we corrupt ſociety, of which truth ought to be the firſt tie; we pervert thoſe duties and mutual offices of civil life, eſtabliſhed to animate us to virtue, into ſnares, and inevitable occaſions of a departure from righteouſneſs; we change friendſhip, which ought to be a grand reſource to us againſt our errors and irregularities, into a commerce of diſſimulation and mutual deception: by that, in a word, we render truth hateful and ridiculous by rendering it rare among men; and, when I ſay we, I mean more eſpecially the ſouls who belong to God, and who are intruſted with the intereſts of truth upon the earth. Yes, my brethren, I would that faithful ſouls had a language peculiar to them amid the world; that other maxims, other ſentiments, were found in them than in the reſt of men; and, while all others ſpeak the language of the paſſions, that they alone ſpeak the language of truth. I would that, while the world hath its Balaams, who, by their diſcourſes and counſels, authoriſe irregularity and licentiouſneſs, piety had its Phineaſes, who durſt boldly adopt the intereſts of the law of God, and of the ſanctity of its maxims: that, while the world hath its impious philoſophers and falſe ſages, who think that it does them honour openly to proclaim, that we ought to live only for the preſent, and that the end of man is, in no reſpect, different from that of the beaſt, piety had its Solomons, who, undeceived by their own experience, durſt publicly avow, that, excepting the fear of the Lord and the obſervance of his commandments, all elſe is vanity and vexation of ſpirit: that, while the world hath its charms and enchantments, which ſeduce kings and the people by their

deluſions

deluſions and flatteries, piety had its Moſeſes and Aarons, who had the courage to confound, by the ſole force of truth, their impoſition and artifice: in a word, that, while the world hath its prieſts and its ſcribes, who, like thoſe of the goſpel, weaken the truth, piety had its magi, who dread not to announce it in the preſence even of thoſe to whom it cannot but be diſpleaſing.

Not that I condemn the modifications of a ſage prudence, which apparently gives up ſomething to the prejudices of men, only that it may more ſurely recal them to rule and duty. I know that truth loves neither raſh nor indiſcreet defenders; that the paſſions of men require a certain deference and management; that they are in the ſituation of ſick perſons, to whom it is often neceſſary to diſguiſe and render palatable their medicines, and to cure them without their privity. I know that all deferences paid to the paſſions, when their tendency is to eſtabliſh the truth, are not weakeners, but auxiliaries of it; and that the grand rule of the zeal of truth, is prudence and charity. But ſuch is not the intention when they weaken it by flattering and ſervile adulations; they ſeek to pleaſe, and not to edify; they ſubſtitute themſelves in the place of truth; and their ſole wiſh is to attract thoſe ſuffrages which are due to it alone. And, let it not be ſaid that it is more through ſourneſs and oſtentation, than through charity, that the juſt claim a merit in diſdaining to betray truth. The world, which is always involved in deceit, of which the commerce and mutual ties revolve only upon diſſimulation and artifice, which conſiders theſe even as an honourable ſcience, and which is totally unacquainted with this noble rectitude of heart, cannot ſuppoſe it in others; it is its profound corruption which is the cauſe of its ſuſpecting the ſincerity and the courage of the upright;

it is a mode of acting which appears ridiculous, becauſe it is new to it; and, as it finds in it ſo marked a ſingularity, it loves better to ſuppoſe that it is rather the conſequence of pride, or folly, than of virtue.

From thence it is that the truth is not only diſguiſed, but it is likewiſe openly betrayed. Laſt diſſimulation of the prieſts of our goſpel: a diſſimulation of falſehood. They are not ſatisfied with quoting the prophecies in obſcure and mollified terms: but, ſeeing that the magi did not return to Jeruſalem as they had intended, they add, no doubt in order to calm Herod, that, aſhamed of not having been able to find that new King of whom they came in ſearch, they have not had the courage to return: that they are ſtrangers little verſed in the knowledge of the law and of the prophets; and that the light of Heaven, which they pretended to follow, was nothing but a vulgar illuſion, and a ſuperſtitious prejudice of a rude and credulous nation. And ſuch muſt indeed have been their language to Herod, ſince they themſelves act according to it, and do not run to Bethlehem to ſeek the new-born King, in order, it appears, to complete the perſuaſion of Herod, that there was more credulity than truth in the ſuperſtitious reſearch of theſe magi.

And behold to what we at laſt come: in conſequence of a ſervile compliance with the paſſions of men, and of continually wiſhing to pleaſe them at the expence of truth, we at laſt openly abandon it; we cowardly and downrightly ſacrifice it to our intereſt, our fortune, and our reputation; we betray our conſcience, our duty and our underſtanding; and, conſequently, from the moment that truth becomes irkſome to us, or renders us diſpleaſing, we diſavow it, and deliver it up to oppreſſion and iniquity; like Peter, we de-

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ny that we have ever been ſeen as its diſciple. In this manner we change our heart into a cowardly and groveling one, to which any profitable falſehood coſts nothing; into an artificial and pliable heart, which aſſumes every form, and never poſſeſſes any determinate one; into a weak and flattering heart, which has not the courage to refuſe its ſuffrage to any thing but unprofitable and unfortunate virtue; into a corrupted and intereſted heart, which makes ſubſervient to its purpoſes, religion, truth, juſtice, and all that is moſt ſacred among men; in a word, a heart capable of every thing except that of being true, noble, and ſincere. And think not that ſinners of this deſcription are ſo very rare in the world. We ſhun only the notoriety and ſhame of theſe faults; ſecret and ſecure baſeneſſes find few ſcrupulous hearts; we often love only the reputation and glory of truth.

It is only proper to take care that, in pretending to defend the truth, we are not defending the mere illuſions of our own mind. Pride, ignorance, and ſelf-conceit, every day furniſh defenders to error, equally intrepid and obſtinate as any of whom faith can boaſt. The only truth worthy of our love, of our zeal, and of our courage, is that held out to us by the church; for it alone we ought to endure every thing; beyond that, we are no longer but the martyrs of our own obſtinacy and vanity.

O my God! pour then through my ſoul that humble and generous love of the truth, with which thy choſen are filled in heaven, and which is the only characteriſtic mark of the juſt upon the earth. Let my life be only ſuch as to render glory to thine eternal truths; let me honour them through the ſanctity of my manners; let me defend them through zeal for thy intereſts alone, and enable me continually

nally to oppoſe them to error and vanity: annihilate in my heart thoſe human fears, that prudence of the fleſh which dreads to lay open to perſons their errors and their vices. Suffer not that I be a feeble reed which bends to every blaſt, nor that I ever bluſh to bear the truth imprinted on my forehead as the moſt illuſtrious title with which thy creature can glorify himſelf, and as the moſt glorious mark of thy mercies upon my ſoul. In effect, it is not ſufficient to be the witneſs and depoſitary of it, it is alſo neceſſary to be its defender: character contraſted with that of Herod, who is, in our goſpel at preſent its enemy and its perſecutor. Laſt inſtruction with which our goſpel furniſhes us: the truth perſecuted.

PART III. If it is a crime to withſtand the truth when it ſhines upon us; iniquitouſly to withhold it when we owe it to others; it is the fulneſs of iniquity, and the moſt diſtinguiſhed character of reprobation, to perſecute and combat it. Nevertheleſs, nothing more common in the world than this perſecution of truth; and the impious Herod, who, on the preſent occaſion, ſets himſelf up againſt it, has more imitators than is ſuppoſed.

For, in the firſt place, he perſecutes it through that repugnancy which he viſibly ſhews to the truth, and which induces all Jeruſalem to follow his example; and this is what I call a perſecution of ſcandal. Secondly, He perſecutes it by endeavouring to corrupt the prieſts, and even by laying ſnares for the piety of the magi; and this is what I call a perſecution of ſeduction. Laſtly, He perſecutes it by ſhedding innocent blood; and this is a perſecution of power and violence. Now, my brethren if the brevity of a diſcourſe permitted me to examine theſe three deſcriptions of perſecution of the truth, there is not perhaps

perhaps one of them of which you would not find yourſelves culpable.

For, *1ſtly*, Who can flatter himſelf with not being among the number of the perſecutors of truth, under the deſcription of ſcandals? I even ſpeak not of thoſe diſorderly ſouls who have erected the ſtandard of guilt and licentiouſneſs, and who pay little, if indeed any, attention to the public opinion: the moſt notorious ſcandals are not always thoſe which are moſt to be dreaded; and avowed debauchery, when carried to a certain degree, occaſions, in general, more cenſures upon our conduct than imitations of our exceſſes. I ſpeak of thoſe ſouls delivered up to the pleaſures, to the vanities, and to all the abuſes of the age, and whoſe conduct, in other reſpects regular, is not only irreproachable in the ſight of the world, but attracts even the praiſes and the eſteem of men; and I ſay that they perſecute the truth through their ſole examples, that they undo, as much as in them lies, the maxims of the goſpel in every heart; that they cry out to all men, that ſhunning of pleaſures is a needleſs precaution; that love of the world and the love of virtue are not at all incompatible; that a taſte for theatres, for dreſs, and for public amuſements, is entirely innocent; and that it is eaſy to lead a good life even while living like the reſt of the world. This worldly regularity is therefore a continual perſecution of the truth; and ſo much the more dangerous, as it is an authoriſed perſecution which has nothing odious in it, and againſt which no precaution is taken; which attacks the truth without violence, without effuſion of blood, under the ſmiling image of peace and ſociety; and which, through theſe means, occaſions more deſerters from the truth than ever all tyrants and tortures formerly did.

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I ſpeak even of thoſe good characters who only imperfectly fulfil the duties of piety, who ſtill retain, too, public remains of the paſſions of the world and of its maxims: and, I ſay, that they perſecute the truth through theſe unfortunate remains of infidelity and weakneſs; that they are the occaſion of its being blaſphemed by the impious and other ſinners; that they authoriſe the ſenſeleſs diſcourſes of the world againſt the piety of the ſervants of God; that they are the cauſe of ſouls being diſguſted with virtue, who might otherwiſe feel themſelves diſpoſed to it; that they confirm, in the path of error, thoſe who ſeek pretexts to remain in it: in a word, that they render virtue either ſuſpicious or ridiculous. Thus, ſtill every day, as the Lord formerly complained through his prophet Jeremiah, the backſliding Iſrael, that is to ſay, the world, juſtifies herſelf more than treacherous Judah, that is to ſay, the weakneſſes of the good: I mean to ſay, that the world thinks itſelf ſecure when it ſees that thoſe ſouls, who profeſs piety, join in its pleaſures and frivolities; are warm, like the reſt of men, upon fortune, upon favour, upon preferences, and upon injuries; purſue their own ends, have ſtill a deſire of pleaſing, eagerly ſeek after diſtinctions and favours, and ſometimes make even piety ſubſervient towards more ſurely attaining them. Ah! it is then that the world triumphs, and that it feels itſelf comforted in the compariſon; it is then that, finding ſuch a reſemblance between the virtue of the good and its own vices, it feels tranquil upon its ſituation, and thinks that it is needleſs to change, ſince, in changing the name, the ſame things are ſtill retained.

And it is here that I cannot prevent myſelf from ſaying, with the apoſtle Peter, to you, whom God hath recalled from the ways of the world and of the paſſions, to thoſe of

of truth and righteouſneſs; let us act in ſuch a manner among the worldly, that, in place of decrying virtue as they have hitherto done, and of deſpiſing or cenſuring thoſe who practice it; the good works which they ſhall behold in us, our pure and holy manners, our patience under ſcorn, our wiſdom and our circumſpection in diſcourſe, our modeſty and humility in exaltation, our equality of mind and ſubmiſſion under diſgrace, our gentleneſs towards our inferiors, our regard for our equals, our fidelity towards our maſters, our univerſal charity towards our brethren, force them to render glory to God, make them to reſpect and even envy the deſtiny of virtue, and diſpoſe their hearts to receive the grace of light and of truth when it ſhall deign to viſit them, and to enlighten them upon their erroneous ways. Let us ſhut up the mouth of all the enemies of virtue by the ſight of an irreprehenſible life: let us honour piety, that it may honour us: let us render it reſpectable if we wiſh to gain partiſans to it: let us furniſh to the world examples which condemn it, and not cenſures which juſtify it: let us accuſtom it to think, that godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having promiſe not only of the life to come, but alſo peace, ſatisfaction, and content, which are the only good, and the only real pleaſures of the preſent life.

To this perſecution of ſcandal Herod adds a perſecution of ſeduction: he tempts the ſanctity and the fidelity of the miniſters of the law: he wiſhes to make the zeal and the holy boldneſs of the magi inſtrumental to his impious deſigns: in a word, he neglects nothing to undo the truth before he openly attacks it.

And behold a freſh manner in which we continually perſecute the truth. In the *firſt* place, We weaken the piety of

of the juſt by accuſing their fervor of exceſs, and by ſtruggling to perſuade them that they do too much; we exhort them, like the grand tempter, to change their ſtones into bread; that is to ſay, to abate from their auſterity, and to change that retired, gloomy, and laborious life, into a more ordinary and comfortable one: we give them room to dread, that the ſequel will not correſpond with theſe beginnings: in a word, we endeavour to draw them nearer to us, being unwilling to raiſe ourſelves to a level with them. *adly*, We perhaps tempt even their fidelity and their innocence, by giving the moſt animated deſcriptions of thoſe pleaſures from which they fly: like the wife of Job, we blame their ſimplicity and weakneſs: we exaggerate to them the inconveniencies of virtue and the difficulties of perſeverance: we ſhake them by the example of unfaithful ſouls, who, after putting their hand to the plough, have caſt a look behind, and abandoned their labour: what ſhall I ſay? We perhaps attack even the immovable ground-work of faith, and we inſinuate the inutility of the ſelf-denials it propoſes, from the uncertainty of its promiſes. *3dly*, We haraſs, by our authority, the zeal and the piety of thoſe perſons who are dependent upon us: we exact duties of them, either incompatible with their innocence, or dangerous to their virtue: we place them in ſituations either painful or trying to their faith; we interdict them from practices and obſervances, either neceſſary for their ſupport in piety, or profitable towards their progreſs in it: in a word, we become domeſtic tempters with reſpect to them, being neither capable of taſting good ourſelves nor ſuffering it in others, and performing, towards theſe ſouls, the office of the demon, who only watches in order to deſtroy. *Laſtly*, We render ourſelves culpable of this perſecution of ſeduction, by making our talents inſtrumental to the deſtruction of the reign of Jeſus

ſus Chriſt: the talents of the body in inſpiring iniquitous paſſions; in placing ourſelves in hearts where God alone ought to be; in corrupting the ſouls for whom Jeſus Chriſt gave his blood: the talents of the mind in inducing to vice; in embelliſhing it with all the charms moſt calculated to hide its infamy and horror; in preſenting the poiſon under the moſt alluring and ſeductive form; and in rendering it immortal by laſcivious works, through the means of which a miſerable author ſhall, to the end of ages, preach up vice, corrupt hearts, and inſpire his brethren with every deplorable paſſion which had enſlaved himſelf during life; ſhall ſee his puniſhment and his torments increaſed in proportion as the impious fire he has lighted up ſhall ſpread upon the earth; ſhall have the ſhocking conſolation of declaring himſelf, even after death, againſt his God, of gaining ſouls from him whom he had redeemed, of ſtill inſulting his holineſs and majeſty, of perpetuating his own rebellion and diſorders even beyond the tomb, and of making, even to the fulfilment of time, the crimes of all men his own crimes. Woe, ſaith the Lord, to all thoſe who riſe up againſt my name and glory, and who lay ſnares for my people! I will take vengeance of them on the day of my judgment: I will demand of them the blood of their brethren whom they have ſeduced, and whom they have cauſed to periſh: and I will multiply upon them, and make them for ever to feel the moſt dreadful evils, in return for that glory which they have raviſhed from me.

But, a laſt deſcription of perſecution, ſtill more fatal to truth, is that which I call a perſecution of power and violence. Herod, having gained nothing by his artifices, at laſt throws off the maſk, openly declares himſelf the per-

ſecutor of Jeſus Chriſt, and wiſhes to extinguiſh in its birth that light which comes to illuminate the whole world.

The ſole mention of the cruelty of that impious prince ſtrikes us with horror; and it does not appear that ſo barbarous an example can ever find imitators among us: nevertheleſs, the world is full of theſe kinds of public and avowed perſecutors of the truth: and, if the church be no longer afflicted with the barbarity of tyrants, and with the effuſion of her children's blood, ſhe is ſtill every day perſecuted by the public deriſions which the worldly make of virtue, and by the ruin of thoſe faithful ſouls whom ſhe with grief, ſo often beholds ſinking under the dread of their deriſions and cenſures.

Yes, my brethren, thoſe diſcourſes which you ſo readily allow yourſelves againſt the piety of the ſervants of God, of thoſe ſouls who, by their fervent homages, recompenſe his glory for your crimes and inſults: thoſe deriſions of their zeal and of their holy intoxication for their God; thoſe biting ſarcaſms which rebound from their perſon upon virtue itſelf, and are the moſt dangerous temptation of their penitence: that ſeverity on their account which forgives them nothing, and changes even their virtues into vices; that language of blaſphemy and of mockery, which throws an air of ridicule over the ſerioufneſs of their compunction: which gives appellations of irony and contempt to the moſt reſpectable practices of their piety; which ſhakes their faith, checks their holy reſolutions, diſheartens their weakneſs, makes them, as it were, aſhamed of virtue, and often is the cauſe of their returning to vice: behold what, with the ſaints, I call an open and declared perſecution of the truth. You perſecute in your brother,

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ſays St. Auguſtin, that which the tyrants themſelves have never perſecuted; they have deprived him only of life; your ſcheme is to deprive him of innocence and virtue: their perſecution extended only to the body; you carry yours even to the deſtruction of his ſoul.

What my brethren! is it not enough that you do not yourſelves ſerve the God for whom you are created? (This is what the firſt defenders of faith, the Turtullians and the Cyprians, formerly ſaid to the Pagan perſecutors of the faithful; and muſt it be that we, alas! have the ſame complaints to make againſt Chriſtians?) Is it not enough? Muſt you alſo perſecute thoſe who ſerve him? You are then determined neither to adore him yourſelves nor to ſuffer that others do it? You every day forgive ſo many extravagancies to the followers of the world, ſo many unreaſonable paſſions; you excuſe them; what do I ſay? You applaud them in the inordinate deſires of their heart: in their moſt ſhameful paſſions you find conſtancy, fidelity and dignity: You give honourable names to their moſt infamous vices; and it is a juſt and faithful ſoul alone, a ſervant of the true God, who has no indulgence to expect from you, and is certain of attracting upon himſelf your contempt and cenſures? But, my brethren, theatrical and other amuſements are publicly licenſed, and nothing is ſaid againſt them: the madneſs of gambling has its declared partiſans, and they are quietly put up with: ambition has its worſhippers and ſlaves, and they are even commended: voluptuouſneſs has its altars and victims, and no one conteſt them: avarice has its idolaters, and not a word is ſaid againſt them: all the paſſions, like ſo many ſacrilegious divinities, have their eſtabliſhed worſhip, without the ſmalleſt exception being taken; and the ſole Lord of the univerſe, and the Sovereign of all men, and the only

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ly God upon the earth, either ſhall not be ſerved at all, or ſhall not be it with impunity, and without every obſtacle being placed in the way of his ſervice?

Great God! avenge then thine own glory: render again to thy ſervants that honour and that luſtre which the impious unceaſingly raviſh from them: do not, as formerly, ſend ferocious beaſts from the depths of their foreſt to devour the contemners of virtue, and of the holy ſimplicity of thy prophets; but deliver them up to their inordinate deſires ſtill more cruel and inſatiable than the lion or the bear, in order that, worn out, racked by the internal convulſions and the frenzies of their own paſſions, they may know all the value and all the excellence of that virtue which they contemn, and aſpire to the felicity and to the deſtiny of thoſe ſouls who ſerve thee.

For, my brethren, you whom this diſcourſe regards, allow me, and with grief, to ſay it here: muſt you be the inſtruments which the demon employs to tempt the choſen of God, and, if it were poſſible, to lead them aſtray? Muſt it be that you appear upon the earth merely in order to juſtify the prophecies of the holy books with regard to the perſecutions, which, even to the end, are inevitable to all thoſe who ſhall wiſh to live in godlineſs which is in Jeſus Chriſt? Muſt you alone be the means of ſuſtaining the perpetuity of that frightful ſucceſſion of perſecutors of faith and of virtue, which is to endure as long as the church? Muſt you, in default now of tyrants and of tortures, continue to be the rock and the ſcandal of the goſpel? Renounce then yourſelves the hope which is in Jeſus Chriſt; join yourſelves with thoſe barbarous nations, or with thoſe impious characters who blaſpheme his glory and his divinity, if to you it appears ſo worthy of deriſion and laughter

ſlaughter to live under his laws, and according to his maxims. An infidel or a ſavage might ſuppoſe that we, who ſerve and who worſhip him, are under deluſion; he might pity our credulity and weakneſs when he ſees us ſacrificing the preſent to a futurity, and an hope which, in his eyes, might appear fabulous and chimerical, but he would be forced at leaſt, to confeſs that, if we do not deceive ourſelves, and if our faith be juſtly grounded, we are the wiſeſt and the moſt eſtimable of all men. But for you, who would not dare to ſtart a doubt of the certitude of faith, and of the hope which is in Jeſus Chriſt, with what eyes, with what aſtoniſhment would that infidel regard the cenſures which you ſo plentifully beſtow upon his ſervants? You proſtrate yourſelves before his croſs, he would ſay to you, as before the pledge of your ſalvation; and you laugh at thoſe who bear it in their heart, and who ground their whole hope and expectation in it! You worſhip him as your Judge; and you contemn and load with ridicule thoſe who dread him, and who anxiouſly labour to render him favourable to their intereſts? You believe him to be ſincere and faithful in his word; and you look upon, as weak minds, thoſe who place their truſt in him, and who ſacrifice every thing to the grandeur and to the certainty of his promiſes! O man, ſo aſtoniſhing, ſo full of contradictions, ſo little in uniſon with thyſelf, would the infidel exclaim, how great and how holy muſt the God of the Chriſtians therefore be, ſeeing that, among all thoſe who know him, he hath no enemies but ſuch as are of thy deſcription!

Let us, therefore, reſpect virtue, my brethren; let us honour in his ſervants, the gifts of God, and the wonders of his grace. Let us merit, by our deference and our eſteem for piety, the bleſſing of piety itſelf. Let us regard the

the worthy and pious as the ſouls who alone continue to draw down the favours of Heaven upon the earth, as reſources eſtabliſhed to reconcile us one day with God, as bleſſed ſigns, which prove to us that the Lord ſtill looketh upon men with pity, and continueth his mercies upon his church. Let us encourage by our praiſes, if we cannot ſtrengthen by our example, the ſouls who return to him: let us applaud their change, if we think it impoſſible, as yet, to change ourſelves: let us glory in defending them, if our paſſions will not, as yet, permit us to imitate them. Let us reverence and eſteem virtue. Let us have no friends but the friends of God: let us count upon the fidelity of men only in proportion as they are faithful to their Maſter and Creator: let us confide our ſorrows and our ſufferings only to thoſe who can preſent them to him, who alone can conſole them: let us believe to be in our real intereſts only thoſe who are in the intereſts of our ſalvation. Let us ſmooth the way to our converſion: let us, by our reſpect for the juſt, prepare the world to behold us one day, without ſurpriſe, juſt ourſelves. Let us not by our deriſions and cenſures, raiſe up an invincible ſtumbling-block of human reſpect, which ſhall for ever prevent us from declaring ourſelves diſciples of that piety which we have ſo loudly and ſo publicly decried. Let us render glory to the truth; and, in order that it may deliver us, let us religiouſly receive it, like the magi, from the moment that it is manifeſted to us: let us not diſſemble it, like the prieſts, when we owe it to our brethren: let us not declare againſt it, like Herod, when we can no longer diſſemble it ourſelves, in order that, after having walked in the ways of truth upon the earth, we may all together one day be ſanctified in truth and perfected in charity.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

LUKE ii. 21.

His name was called Jeſus, which was ſo named of the angel.

A GOD lowering himſelf ſo far as even to become man, aſtoniſhes and confounds reaſon; and into what an abyſs of errors is it not plunged, if the light of faith come not ſpeedily to its aid, to diſcover the depth of the divine wiſdom concealed under the apparent abſurdity of the myſtery of a Man-God? Thus, in all times, this fundamental point of our holy religion, I mean the divinity of Jeſus Chriſt, hath been the object moſt expoſed to the fooliſh oppoſitions of the human mind. Men, full of pride, whoſe mouths ought to be filled with only thankſgivings for the ineffable gift made to them by the Father of mercies, of his only Son, have continually inſulted him, by vomiting forth the moſt impious blaſphemies againſt that adorable Son. Full of blindneſs, who have not ſeen that the ſole name of Jeſus, which is given to him on this day, that name which he at firſt receives in heaven, and which an angel conveys to the earth, to Mary and Joſeph, is the inconteſtible proof of his divinity. That ſacred name eſtabliſhes him the Saviour of mankind; Saviour, in that, through the effuſion of blood, which becomes our ranſom,

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he delivers us from, and from the conſequences inſeparable from it, viz. the tyranny of the demon and of hell: Saviour, in that, attracting upon his own head the chaſtiſement due to our prevarications, he reconciles us with God, and opens to us afreſh the entry of the eternal ſanctuary, which ſin had ſhut againſt us. But, my brethren, if the Son of Mary be but a mere man, of what value, in the eyes God, will be the oblation of his blood? If Jeſus Chriſt be not God, how will his meditation be accepted, while he would himſelf have occaſion for a mediator to reconcile him with God?

This proof, which I only touch upon here, and ſo many others with which religion furniſhes me, would quickly ſtop the mouth of the ungodly, and confound his impiety, if I undertook to ſhew them in all their light, and to give an extenſion in proportion to their importance. But, God forbid that I ſhould come here, into the holy temple where the altars of our divine Saviour are raiſed up, where his worſhippers aſſemble, to enter into conteſtation, as if I ſpake in the preſence of his enemies, or, to make the apology of the myſtery of the Man-God, before a believing people, and a ſovereign whoſe moſt illuſtrious and moſt cheriſhed title is that of Chriſtian. It is not, therefore, to combat theſe ungodly, that, on this day, I conſecrate my diſcourſe to the divinity and to the eternal glory of Jeſus, Son of the living God; I come for the ſole purpoſe of conſoling our faith, while recounting the wonders of him who is its Author and Perfecter; and to reanimate our piety in expoſing to you the glory and the divinity of our Mediator who is its object and its ſweeteſt hope.

It is even proper to renew, from time to time, theſe grand truths in the minds of the great and of the princes

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of the people, in order to ſtrengthen them againſt thoſe diſcourſes of infidelity which they, in general, are only too much in the way of hearing; and it is expedient ſometimes to raiſe up the veil which covers the ſanctuary, that they may have a view of thoſe hidden beauties which religion only holds out to their reſpect and to their homages.

Now, the divinity of the Mediator can only be proven by his miniſtry; his titles can appear only in his functions: and, in order to know whether he be deſcended from heaven, and equal with the moſt High, it requires only to relate the purpoſes for which he came upon the earth. He came, my brethren, to form an holy and a believing people; a believing people, who ſubject their reaſon to the ſacred yoke of faith; an holy people, whoſe converſation is in heaven, and who are no longer reſponſible to the fleſh, to live according to the fleſh: ſuch is the general deſign of his temporal miſſion.

The luſtre of his miniſtry is the firmeſt foundation of our faith: the ſpirit of his miniſtry, the ſole rule of our morals. Now, if he was only a man commiſſioned of God, the luſtre of his miniſtry would be the inevitable occaſion of our ſuperſtition and idolatry; the ſpirit of his miniſtry would be the fatal ſnare to entrap our innocence. Thus, whether we conſider the luſtre or the ſpirit of his miniſtry, the glory of his divinity remains equally and invincibly eſtabliſhed.

O Jeſus, ſole Lord of all, accept this public homage of our confeſſion and of our faith! While impiety blaſphemes in ſecret, and under the ſhades of darkneſs againſt thy glory, allow us the conſolation of publiſhing it with the voice of

all ages in the face of theſe altars; and form, in our heart, not only that faith which confeſſes and worſhips thee, but alſo that which follows and which imitates thee.

PART I. God can manifeſt himſelf to men, only in order to teach them what he is, and what men owe to him; and religion is, properly ſpeaking, but a divine light, which diſcovers God to man, and which regulates the duties of man towards God. Whether the moſt High ſhew himſelf to the earth, or whether he fill extraordinary men with his ſpirit, the end of all his proceedings can be only the knowledge and the ſanctification of his name in the univerſe, and the eſtabliſhment of a worſhip in which they render to him what is due to him alone.

Now, if the Lord Jeſus, come in the fulneſs of time, was nothing more than an upright and innocent man, only choſen to be the meſſenger of God upon the earth; the principal end of his miniſtry would have been that of rendering the world idolatrous, and of raviſhing from the divinity that glory which is his due, in order to appropriate it to himſelf.

In effect my brethren, whether we conſider the luſtre of his miniſtry in that pompous train of oracles and of figurative alluſions which have preceded him in the wonderful circumſtances which have accompanied him, and, laſtly, in the works which he hath operated; the luſtre of it is ſuch, that, if Jeſus Chriſt was only a man ſimilar to us, God, who hath ſent him upon the earth arrayed in ſuch glory and power, would himſelf have deceived us, and would be culpable of the idolatry of thoſe who worſhip him.

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The firſt ſignal character of the miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt, is that, from the beginning of the world, it was foretold and promiſed to men. Scarcely had the fall of Adam taken place, when the Reſtorer, whom his guilt had rendered neceſſary to the earth, .. inewn to him from afar. In the following ages, God, it would appear, is only occupied in preparing mankind for his coming: if he manifeſt himſelf to the patriarchs, it is in order to confirm their faith in that expectation; if he inſpire prophets, it is in order to announce him; if he chooſe to himſelf a people, it is for the purpoſe of making it the depoſitary of that grand promiſe; if he preſcribe ſacrifices and religious ceremonies to men, it is in order to trace out in them, as from afar, the hiſtory of him who was to come. Whatever took place upon the earth ſeems to lead to that grand event: empires and kingdoms fall or riſe only in order to prepare the way for it: the heavens are only opened to promiſe it: and, as St. Paul ſays, the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain to bring forth the righteous, who is to come for the redemption of our body from the bondage of corruption and ſin.

Now, my brethren, to inſpire, from the beginning of all ages, the earth with the expectation of a man, and to announce him to it from heaven, is already, in fact, to prepare men to receive him with a kind of religion and worſhip; and, even granting that Jeſus Chriſt were to have only the eclat of that particular circumſtance which diſtinguiſhes him from all other men, the ſuperſtition of the people, with regard to him, were he only a ſimple creature, had been to dread. But, even the circumſtance of Jeſus being foretold is not ſo wonderful as thoſe in which he hath been it, which are more ſurpriſing than even the prophecies themſelves. In effect, if Cyrus and John the Baptiſt have

have been foretold, long before their birth, in the prophecies of Iſaiah and of Malachi, theſe are only individual prophecies, without conſequence or train, and which are found in a ſingle prophet; predictions which announce only particular events, and by which the religion of the people could never be caught or ſurpriſed; Cyrus to be the reeſtabliſher of the walls of Jeruſalem; John the Baptiſt to prepare the way for him who was to come; both in order to confirm, by the accompliſhment of their particular prophecies, the truth and the divinity of all the prophecies which announce Jeſus Chriſt.

But here, my brethren, it is a Meſſenger of Heaven, foretold by a whole people, announced, during four thouſand years, by a long train of prophecies, deſired of all nations, figured by all the ceremonies, expected by all the juſt, and ſhewn from afar in all ages. The patriarchs expire in wiſhing to ſee him: that juſt live in that expectation: fathers inſtruct their children to wiſh for him; and this deſire is like a domeſtic religion which is perpetuated from age to age. The prophets themſelves of the gentiles ſee the Star of Jacob ſhining from afar; and this great event is announced even in the oracles of idols. Here, it is not for a particular event; it is to be the reſource of the condemned world, the legiſlator of all people, the light of nations, the ſalvation of Iſrael; it is in order to blot out iniquity from the earth, to bring an eternal righteouſneſs, to fill the univerſe with the ſpirit of God, and to be the bleſſed bearer of an immortal peace to all men. What a pompous train! What a ſnare for the religion of all ages, if ſuch magnificent preparations announce only a ſimple creature; and, more eſpecially, in times when the credulity of the people ſo eaſily placed extraordinary men in the rank of Gods!

Beſides,

Beſides, when John the Baptiſt appears on the borders of the Jordan afraid, it would ſeem that the ſingle oracle which had foretold him might become an occaſion of idolatry to the people whom the fame of his ſanctity attracted round him, he performs no miracles; he never ceaſes to ſay: "I am not he whom you expect; but one mightier "than me cometh, the latchet of whoſe ſhoes I am not wor- "thy to unlooſe;" he is only watchful it would appear, to prevent ſuperſtitious honours. Jeſus Chriſt, on the contrary, whom four thouſand years of expectation, of alluſions, of prophecies, of promiſes, had, with ſo much magnificence, announced to the earth; Jeſus Chriſt, far from preventing the ſuperſtition of the people with regard to himſelf, comes in full authority and might; he does miracles and deeds which no one had ever done before him; and, not only he raiſes himſelf above John the Baptiſt, but he gives out that he is equal with God himſelf. Had the error been to dread, and, if to render to him divine honours had been an idolatry, where would be his zeal for the glory of him who ſends him, or where would be his love for men?

And yet more, my brethren, all the extraordinary men of whom the preceding ages could boaſt, all the juſt of the law and of the age of the patriarchs, had been only the imperfect types of the Chriſt; and again, each of them repreſented only ſome individual trait of his life and miniſtry; Melchiſedec, his prieſthood; Abraham, his quality of Head and Father of believers; Iſaac, his ſacrifice; Job, his perſecutions and ſufferings; Moſes, his office of Mediator; Joſhua, his triumphant entry into the land of the living with a choſen people. All theſe men, however, ſo venerable and ſo miraculous, were only rude ſketches of the Meſſiah to come; and how great muſt that Meſſiah himſelf have

have been to be, ſeeing his figures were ſo illuſtrious and ſo ſhining! But, deprive Jeſus Chriſt of his divinity and of his eternal origin, and the reality has nothing ſuperior to the figure. I know, as we ſhall afterwards ſay, that, when we narrowly examine the luſtre of his wonders, we ſhall ſee them marked with divine characters which are only to be found in the life of thoſe great men. But, to judge of them by the eyes of the ſenſes alone, the parallel would not be favourable to Jeſus Chriſt. Is he greater than Abraham? That man ſo great, that the Lord himſelf, among his moſt pompous names, had taken that of the God of Abraham, as if in order to proclaim to the world that the homages of a man, ſo righteous and ſo extraordinary, were more glorious to his ſovereignty than the title of God of empires and of nations: ſo great, that the Jews believed themſelves ſuperior to all other nations of the earth, only becauſe they were the poſterity of the famous chief ſo cheriſhed of Heaven; and that fathers, in recounting to their children the wonders of their nation and the hiſtory of their anceſtors, animated them to virtue, only by putting them in remembrance that they were the children of Abraham and the members of a holy race? Is he more wonderful than Moſes? That man, mighty in words and in deeds, mediator of an holy covenant, who broke the yoke of Egypt and delivered his people from bondage: that man, who was eſtabliſhed the God of Pharaoh, who ſeemed the maſter of nature, who covered the earth with plagues, who divided ſeas, who made a new nouriſhment to be ſhowered from heaven; that man, who ſaw the Lord face to face upon the holy mountain, and who appeared before Iſrael all reſplendent in light? What is there more aſtoniſhing or more magnificent in the life of Jeſus Chriſt? Nevertheleſs, theſe were only rude ſketches of his glory and might: he was to be the laſt finiſhing and

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perfection of them. Now, if Jeſus Chriſt were not the image of the ſubſtance of his Father and the eternal ſplendour of his glory, he, at the utmoſt, could only be equalled with theſe firſt men; and the incredulity of the Jews might, without blaſphemy, demand of him: "Art thou "greater than our father Abraham, or, than the prophets "which are dead: whom makeſt thou thyſelf?" I have then juſtly ſaid, that if, in the firſt place, you will eſtimate his miniſtry from that pompous train of oracles and of figures which have announced him, the ſplendour is ſuch, that, if Jeſus Chriſt be but a man ſimilar to us, the wiſdom itſelf of God would be culpable of the miſtake of thoſe who worſhip him.

But, my brethren, the Chriſt hath been foretold with his members: we are compriſed in the prophecies which have announced him to the earth: we have been promiſed as an holy race, a ſpiritual people, who were to bear the law engraven on their heart, who were to ſigh after eternal riches, and who were to adore in ſpirit and in truth: like Jeſus Chriſt, we have compoſed the expectation of the juſt of ancient times, and the deſire of nations: we are that new Jeruſalem, pure and undefiled, ſo often announced in the prophets, where God alone was to be known and worſhipped; where faith was to be the ſole light to illuminate us; charity the only bond of union; and the land of promiſe the only hope to animate us. Now, do we anſwer an expectation ſo illuſtrious and ſo holy? Are we worthy of having been the earneſt deſire of all thoſe diſtant ages which have preceded us? Do we merit to have been looked forward to like celeſtial men, who were to fill the earth with ſanctity and righteouſneſs? Have not thoſe ages been deceived in their expectation of the Chriſtian people? Were the juſt of thoſe diſtant times to return upon the earth,

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could we preſent ourſelves to them, and ſay: Behold thoſe celeſtial, ſpiritual, temperate, believing, and charitable men, whom you expected? Alas! my brethren, the juſt of former times were Chriſtians before the birth of faith; and we are ſtill Jews, under all the advantages of the goſpel; we live ſolely for the earth: we know no true riches but the preſent good: our whole religion is grounded in the ſenſes: we have received more aſſiſtances but we are not more believing.

To the luſtre of the prophecies which have announced Jeſus Chriſt, we muſt add that of his works, and of his miracles: ſecond reſplendent character of his miniſtry. Yes, my brethren, even admitting that Heaven had not promiſed him to the earth with ſuch magnificence; that the manner in which he was to appear to the earth had not conſtituted, during all theſe firſt ages, the ſole occupation and expectation of the univerſe; did ever man appear more wonderful, more divine in his actions, and in all the circumſtances of his life?

I ſay, *1ſtly*, in his actions and in his miracles. I know and we come from ſaying it, that, in the ages which preceded him, extraordinary men had appeared upon the earth, to whom the Lord ſeemed to have delegated his omnipotence and virtue: in Egypt and in the deſert Moſes appeared the maſter of heaven and earth; in the following ages Elijah came to preſent the ſame ſight to men. But, when we narrowly examine their power itſelf, we find that all theſe miraculous men always bore with them the marks of weakneſs and dependance.

Moſes only operated his miracles with his myſterious rod; without it he was no longer but a weak and powerleſs man;

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and it would ſeem that the Lord had attached the virtue of miracles to that morſel of parched wood for the purpoſe of making the Iſraelites ſenſible that, in his hands, Moſes himſelf was but a weak and fragile inſtrument, whom he was pleaſed to employ in the operation of grand effects. Jeſus Chriſt operates the grandeſt miracles, even without ſpeaking; and the ſole touch of his garment cures inveterate infirmities. Moſes communicates not to his diſciples the power of operating miracles; for it was an extraneous gift which he had received from Heaven, and which he had not the power of delegating: Jeſus Chriſt leaves to his a ſtill greater efficacy than had appeared even in himſelf. Moſes always acts in the name of the Lord: Jeſus Chriſt operates all in his own name; and the works of his Father are his. Nevertheleſs, this Moſes, who had not been prophecied like Jeſus Chriſt, who remitted not ſins as he did, who never gave himſelf out as equal to God, but only as his faithful ſervant; this Moſes, dreading that, after his death, his miracles ſhould make him paſs for a god, takes precautions leſt, in the revolution of ages, the credulity of his people render to him divine honours: he goes up alone to the mountain, to expire far from the ſight of his brethren, in the fear of their coming to offer up victims upon his tomb; and for ever removes his body from the ſuperſtition of the tribes; he does not ſhew himſelf to his diſciples after his death; he contents himſelf with leaving to them the law of God, and employs every mean to obliterate himſelf from their remembrance. And Jeſus Chriſt, after all the miracles he operates in Judea, after all the propheeies which had announced him, after having appeared as a God upon the earth, his tomb is known to all the univerſe, expoſed to the veneration of all people and ages; even after his death he ſhews himſelf to his diſciples. Was ſuperſtition, then leſs to be dreaded here? Or is Jeſus Chriſt

leſs zealous than Moſes for the glory of the ſupreme Being, and for the ſalvation of men?

Elijah, it is true, raiſes up the dead; but he is obliged to ſtretch himſelf out upon the body of the child whom he recalls to life; and it is eaſily ſeen that he invokes a foreign power; that he withdraws from the empire of death a ſoul which is not ſubjugated to him; and that he is not himſelf the maſter of life and death. Jeſus Chriſt raiſes up the dead as eaſily as he performs the moſt common actions; he ſpeaks as a maſter of thoſe who repoſe in an eternal ſleep; and it is thoroughly felt that he is the God of the dead as of the living, never more tranquil and calm than when he is operating the grandeſt things.

Laſtly, The poets repreſented to us their ſybils and their prieſteſſes as mad women while foretelling the future: it would ſeem that they were unable to ſuſtain the preſence of the falſe ſpirit which dwelt within them. Even our own prophets, when announcing future things, without loſing the uſe of their reaſon, or departing from the ſolemnity and the decency of their miniſtry, partook of a divine enthuſiaſm: the ſoft ſounds of the lyre were often neceſſary to arouſe in them the prophetic ſpirit: it was eaſily to be ſeen that they were animated by a foreign impulſe; and that it was not from their own funds they drew the knowledge of the future, and thoſe hidden myſteries which they announced to men. Jeſus Chriſt prophecies as he ſpeaks; the knowledge of the future has nothing either to move, diſquiet, or ſurpriſe him, becauſe all times are contained in his mind; the future myſteries which he announces are not ſudden and infuſed lights to his ſoul; they are familiar objects to him, always preſent to his view, and the images of which he finds within himſelf; and all

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ages to come, under the immenſity of his regards, are as the preſent day which illuminates us. Thus, neither the reſurrection of the dead, nor the foretelling of the future, ever injures his natural tranquillity; he ſports himſelf, if I may venture to ſay ſo, in operating miracles in the univerſe; and if he, at times, appear to tremble and to be troubled, it is ſolely when viewing the ſin and perverſity of his people; becauſe the more exalted one is in his ſanctity, the more does ſin offer new horrors; and that the only thing which a Man-God can view with trembling, is the ſpectacle of a conſcience ſtained with crimes.

Such is the omnipotency of Jeſus Chriſt: his miracles bear no mark of dependance: and, not ſatisfied with thereby ſhewing to us that he is equal to God, he alſo advertiſes us, that, whatever wonder is operated by his Father upon the earth, he likewiſe operates; and that his Father's works are his. Hath any prophet, down to the period of Jeſus Chriſt, ſpoken in this manner; and who, far from rendering glory to God as the author of every excellent gift, hath attributed to himſelf all the grand things which it had pleaſed the Lord to operate through his miniſtry?

But, my brethren, if we have alſo been prophecied with Jeſus Chriſt, we are moreover participators of his ſovereignty over all creatures. Through faith the Chriſtian is maſter of nature; all is ſubject to him, becauſe he himſelf is inferior only to God; all his actions ought to be miraculous, becauſe they ought all to proceed from a ſublime and a divine principle, and far above the powers of human weakneſs: we ought to be, as I may ſay, miraculous men, maſters of the world in contemning it; exalted above the laws of nature by overcoming them; ſovereign diſpoſers of events by a thorough and tranquil ſubmiſſion

miſſion to them; more powerful than death itſelf by wiſhing for it. Such is the ſublimity of the Chriſtian: and, how great muſt Jeſus Chriſt have been, to have exalted human weakneſs to ſuch a pinnacle of grandeur and might!

Finally, The laſt ſplendid character of his miniſtry is the marvellous and, till then, unheard-of circumſtances which compoſe the whole courſe of his mortal life. I know that he came in nakedneſs and humiliation; but, through theſe obſcure and contemptible externals, what luſtre are not even the enemies of his divinity forced to acknowledge there?

In the *firſt* place, although they conſider him as a man ſimilar to us, they, nevertheleſs, believe him to have been formed, through the inviſible operation of the moſt High, in the womb of a virgin of Judah, in oppoſition to the common law of the children of Adam. What glory already for a ſimple creature!

Secondly, Scarcely is he born, when celeſtial legions ſing the praiſes of the Lord, and give us to underſtand, that this birth renders his glory to the moſt High, and brings an eternal peace upon the earth. What then is this creature who can render glory to the moſt High, whoſe glory is in himſelf alone? Immediately after this a new ſtar calls the wiſe men from the heart of the Eaſt; and, guided by that miraculous light, thoſe righteous men come from the extremities of the earth to worſhip the new King of the Jews.

Trace all the circumſtances of his life. If Mary bring him to the temple, a righteous man and an holy woman proclaim his future greatneſs; and tranſported with an ho-

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ly joy, they die with pleaſure, after having ſeen him whom they call the ſalvation of the world, the light of nations, and the glory of Iſrael. The doctors, aſſembled in the temple, behold, with terror, his infancy to be wiſer and more enlightened than all the wiſdom of old men. In proportion as he grows up, his glory unfolds itſelf: John the Baptiſt, that man, the greateſt of the children of men, humbles himſelf before him, and ſays that he is not worthy of performing the meaneſt offices to him. A voice from Heaven declares that he is the well-beloved Son. The affrighted demons fly from before him, are unable to ſupport the ſole preſence of his ſanctity, and confeſs that he is the holy of God. Collect together teſtimonies ſo different and ſo new, circumſtances ſo unheard-of, and ſo extraordinary: what is this man who appears upon the earth with ſo much eclat? And are not the people who have worſhipped him at leaſt excuſable?

But theſe are only weak preludes of his glory. If he privately withdraw himſelf upon the Tabor, accompanied with three diſciples, his glory, impatient, if I dare to ſay it, at having hitherto been held captive under the veil of humanity, openly burſts forth: he appears all reſplendent in light: the heavenly Father, who then, it would appear, leſt the glory of Jeſus Chriſt ſhould become an occaſion of error and idolatry to the aſtoniſhed diſciples; ſpectators of this ſight, ought to have warned them that this Jeſus, whom they beheld ſo glorious, was nevertheleſs only his ſervant and meſſenger, declares to them, on the contrary, that this is his well-beloved Son, in whom he is well pleaſed, and affixes no bounds to the homages which, according to his pleaſure, they are to render to him. When Moſes appeared ſurrounded with glory, and, as it were, transfigured on mount Sinai, afraid leſt the Iſraelites, always ſuperſti-

tious,

tious, ſhould conſider him as a god deſcended upon the earth, the Lord, amid a flame of fire, declared at the ſame time from on high, "I am that I am, and thou ſhalt wor-"ſhip only me." Moſes himſelf appears before the people with only the tables of the law in his hands, as if to let them know that, notwithſtanding the glory with which they had ſeen him arrayed, he nevertheleſs was only the miniſter, and not the author of the holy law; that he could offer it to them only engraven on ſtone, and that it belonged ſolely to God to engrave it on hearts. But, on the Tabor, Jeſus Chriſt appears as the legiſlator himſelf: the new law is not given to him by his Father to bear it to men; he only commandeth them to liſten to him, and from his own mouth he propoſeth him as their legiſlator, or rather as their living and eternal law.

What more ſhall I ſay, my brethren? If from the Tabor we paſs to mount Calvary; that place, in which all the ignominy of the Son of Man was to be conſummated, is not leſs, however, the theatre of his glory and divinity. All nature diſorganized, confeſſes its Author in him; the ſtars which are hidden; the dead who ariſe; the ſtones of the tombs, which open of their own accord, and break in pieces; the veil of the temple, which is rent from top to bottom; even incredulity itſelf, which confeſſes him through the mouth of the centurion: all feel that it is not an ordinary man who dies, and that things take place upon that mount totally new and extraordinary.

Many righteous before him had died for the truth, by the hands of the impious: the head of the forerunner had lately been ſeen in the palace of Herod, as the price of voluptuouſneſs: Iſaiah, by a grievous death, had rendered glory to God; and notwithſtanding his royal blood, his auguſt

auguſt birth was ineffectual in ſheltering him from thoſe perſecutions which are always the recompenſe of truth and zeal: many others had died for the ſake of righteouſneſs; but nature ſeemed not wholly intereſted in their ſufferings; the dead forſook not their tombs to come and, as it were, reproach to the living their ſacrilege: nothing, in any degree ſimilar, had, as yet, appeared upon the earth.

Survey the reſt of his myſteries; every where you will find traits which diſtinguiſh him from all other men. If he riſe up from among the dead, beſides that it is through his own efficiency, (which no eye had ever yet beheld,) it is not, like ſo many others, who had been raiſed up through the miniſtry of the prophets, to return once more into the empire of death: he ariſes, never more to die; and, even here below, he receives an immortal life, which is what had never yet been accorded to any creature.

If he is carried up into heaven, it is not in a flaming chariot that he vaniſhes in the twinkling of an eye; he aſcends with majeſty, and allows all leiſure to his affectionate diſciples to worſhip him, and to accompany their divine Maſter with their eyes and their homages. The angels, as if to receive him into his empire, come to greet this King of glory, and comfort the affliction of the diſciples, by promiſing him once more to the earth, ſurrounded with glory and immortality. All here announces the God of heaven, who returns to the place from whence he came, and who goes to reſume the poſſeſſion of his own glory; at leaſt, every thing inclines men to believe ſo.

And, in truth, my brethren, when Elijah is taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot, a ſingle diſciple is the only ſpectator

tator of that miraculous aſcenſion; it takes place in a retired ſpot, removed from the view of the other children of the prophets, who, perhaps more credulous and leſs enlightened than Eliſeus, might have been inclined to render divine honours to that miraculous man. But Jeſus Chriſt, ſurrounded with glory, mounts up to heaven before the eyes of five hundred diſciples; the weakeſt, and thoſe who were leaſt confirmed in the faith of his reſurrection, are the firſt who are invited to the holy mountain: nothing is dreaded from their credulity: on the contrary, their adorations are equally permitted as their regrets and tears; and a life full of prodigies, till then ſo unheard-of on the earth, is at laſt terminated by a circumſtance ſtill more wonderful, and ſufficient of itſelf to make him to be regarded as a God, and to immortaliſe error an idolatry among men.

In effect, if the pagan ages, in order to juſtify the ridiculous and impious homagas which they paid to their legiſlators, to the founders of empires, and to other celebrated men, gave it out, in their hiſtorians and poets, that theſe heroes were not dead, but had only diſappeared from the earth; and that, being of the ſame nature with the gods, they had aſcended to heaven, in order to aſſume their ſtation among the other ſtars, which, according to them, were ſo many divinities who enlighten us, and for the purpoſe of there enjoying that immortality to which their divine birth entitled them: if ſo very vulgar a fiction had of itſelf been able to render men ſo long idolatrous, what impreſſion muſt the reality of that fable not have made upon the people? And if the univerſe had worſhipped impoſtors, who were falſely ſaid to have mounted up to heaven, would it not have been excuſable to worſhip a miraculous man, whom men, with their own eyes, had ſeen exalted above the ſtars?

But

But obſerve, my brethren, that the occaſion of error finiſhes not with Jeſus Chriſt; it is announced to us, that, at the end of ages, he will again appear in the heavens ſurrounded with power and majeſty, and accompanied with all the heavenly hoſt: all aſſembled nations ſhall, with trembling, await at his feet the deciſion of their eternal deſtiny: he will ſovereignly pronounce their deciſive ſentence. The Abrahams, the Moſeſes, the Davids, the Elijahs, the John the Baptiſts, and all that ages have produced of great and moſt wonderful, ſhall be ſubmitted to his judgment and to his empire; he will himſelf be exalted above all power, all dominion, and all which is termed great in heaven and in the earth; he will erect his throne above the clouds, and ſit on the right hand of the moſt High: he will appear Maſter, not only of life and death, but the immortal King of ages, the Prince of eternity, the Chief of an holy people, the ſupreme Arbiter of all the created. What then is this man to whom the Lord hath delegated ſuch power? and the dead themſelves, who ſhall appear in judgment before him, ſhall they be condemned for having worſhipped him, when they ſhall ſee him clothed with ſuch glory, majeſty, and power?

And one reflection, which I beg you to make in finiſhing this part of my diſcourſe, is that, if only one extraordinary and divine trait were to be found here in the courſe of a long life, we might be inclined to believe, that it ſometimes pleaſeth the Lord to allow his glory and his power to ſhine forth in his ſervants. Thus, Enoch was carried up, Moſes appeared transfigured on the holy mountain, Elijah was raiſed up to heaven in a fiery chariot, John the Baptiſt was foretold. But, beſides that theſe were individual circumſtances, and that the language of thoſe miraculous men and of their diſciples, with reſpect to the divinity

and to themſelves, left no room for ſuperſtition and miſtake: here, it is an aſſemblage of wonders, which all, or even taken ſeparately, would have been ſufficient to deceive the credulity of men: here, all the different traits, diſperſed among all theſe extraordinary men who had been conſidered almoſt as gods upon the earth, are collected together in Jeſus Chriſt, but in a manner a thouſand times more glorious and more divine. He prophecies, but more loftily, and with more ſtriking characters, than John the Baptiſt: he appears transfigured in the holy mount, but ſurrounded with more glory than Moſes: he aſcends to heaven, but with more marks of power and majeſty than Elijah: he penetrates into the future, but with more accuracy and clearneſs than all the prophets: he is produced, not only from a barren womb like Samuel, but likewiſe by a pure and innocent virgin: what ſhall I ſay? And not only he does not undeceive men by certain and preciſe expreſſions upon his origin as purely human; but his ſole language with reſpect to his equality to the moſt High; but the ſole doctrine of his diſciples, who tell us that he was in the boſom of God from all eternity, and that all hath been made through him, who call him their Lord and their God, who inform us that he is all in all things, would juſtify the error of thoſe who worſhip him, had even his life been, in other reſpects, an ordinary one, and ſimilar to that of other men.

O you! who refuſe to him his glory and his divinity, yet, nevertheleſs, conſider him as a Meſſenger ſent by God to inſtruct men, complete the blaſphemy; and confound him with thoſe impoſtors who have come to ſeduce the world, ſince, far from tending to eſtabliſh the glory of God and the knowledge of his name, the ſplendour of his miniſtry has anſwered the ſole purpoſe of erecting himſelf

ſelf into a divinity, of placing him at the ſide of the moſt High, and of plunging the whole univerſe into the moſt dangerous, the moſt durable, the moſt inevitable, and the moſt univerſal of all idolatries.

For our part my brethren, we who believe in him, and to whom the myſtery of the Chriſt hath been revealed, let us never loſe ſight of that divine model which the Father ſhews to us from on high on the holy mount. Let us enter into the ſpirit of the divers myſteries of which his whole mortal life is compoſed; they are merely the different ſtates of the life of the Chriſtian on this earth: let us confeſs the new empire which Jeſus Chriſt came to form in our hearts. The world, which we have hitherto ſerved, hath never been able to deliver us from our grievances and wretchedneſs. We vainly ſought in it, freedom, peace, and comfort of life; and we have found only ſlavery, diſquiet, bitterneſs and the curſe of life. Behold a new Redeemer, who comes to bring peace to the earth; but it is not as the world promiſes it that he gives it to us. The world had wiſhed to conduct us to peace and happineſs through the pleaſures of the ſenſes, indolence, and a vain philoſophy; it hath not been ſucceſsful; by favouring our paſſions it hath only augmented our puniſhments: Jeſus Chriſt comes to propoſe a new way for the attainment of that peace and happineſs which we ſearch after; detachment from and contempt of the world, mortification of the ſenſes, ſelf-denial, behold the new riches which he comes to diſplay to men. Let us be undeceived: we have no happineſs to expect, even in this life, but by repreſſing our paſſions, and by refuſing ourſelves the gratification of every pleaſure which diſquiets and corrupts the heart: there is no philoſophy, but that of the goſpel, which can beſtow happineſs, or make real ſages, becauſe it alone regulates

the mind, fixes the heart, and, by reſtoring man to God, reſtores him to himſelf. All thoſe who have purſued other ways have found only vanity and vexation of ſpirit; and Jeſus Chriſt alone, in bringing the ſword and ſeparation, is come to bring peace among men.

O my God! I know only too well that the world and its pleaſures make none happy! Come then and reſume thy influence over a heart which in vain endeavours to fly from thee; and which its own diſguſts recal to thee in ſpite of itſelf: come to be its Redeemer, its peace, and its light, and pay more regard to its wretchedneſs than to its crimes.

Behold now the luſtre of the miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt would operate as an inevitable occaſion of idolatry in men, were he only a ſimply creature. Let us now ſee how the ſpirit of his miniſtry would become the ſnare of our innocence.

PART II. The luſtre of the miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt is not the moſt auguſt and moſt magnificent ſide of it. However dignified he hath appeared, in conſequence of all the oracles which have announced him, the works which he hath opperated, and the ſhining circumſtances of his myſteries, theſe are merely the outward appearances, as I may ſay, of his glory and of his grandeur; and, in order to know all that he is, we muſt enter into the principle and ſpirit of his miniſtry. Now, in the ſpirit of his miniſtry are compriſed his doctrine, his favours, and his promiſes. Let us diſplay theſe in their proper extent, and prove, either that we muſt deny to Jeſus Chriſt his quality of a righteous man, and of a meſſenger of the almighty God, which the enemies of his divinity grant him to have been, or we muſt admit that he is himſelf a God manifeſted in the

the fleſh, and come down upon the earth in order to ſave mankind.

Yes, my brethren, this is an inevitable alternative: if Jeſus Chriſt be holy, he is God; and, if his miniſtry be not a miniſtry of deceit and impoſition, it is the miniſtry of eternal Truth itſelf which hath been manifeſted for our inſtruction. Now, the enemies of his divine birth are forced to admit, that he hath been a man righteous, innocent, and friend of God: and if the world hath beheld dark and impious minds, who have likewiſe dared to blaſpheme againſt his innocence and to confound him with ſeducers, theſe have been only ſome individual monſters who were held in abhorrence by the human race, and whoſe names too odious to all nature, are for ever buried in the ſame darkneſs from which the horror of their impiety originally came.

In effect, what man, till then, had appeared upon the earth with more inconteſtable marks of innocence and ſanctity than Jeſus, Son of the living God? In what philoſopher had ever been obſerved ſuch a love of virtue, ſo ſincere a contempt of the world, ſo much charity towards men, ſuch indifference for human glory, ſuch zeal for the glory of the Supreme Being, ſuch elevation above whatever is admired or ſought after by men? How great is his zeal for the ſalvation of men! It is to that object that he directs all his diſcourſes, all his cares, all his deſires, and all his anxieties. The philoſophers criticiſed only the men, and ſolely endeavoured to expoſe their weakneſs or their abſurdities: Jeſus Chriſt never ſpeaks of their vices but in order to point out their remedies. The former were the cenſurers of human weakneſſes; Jeſus Chriſt is their phyſician: the former gloried in being able to point

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out vices in others, from which they themſelves were not exempted; he never ſpeaks, but with the bittereſt ſorrow, of faults, from which his own innocence protects him, and even ſheds tears over the diſorders of an unbelieving city: it is eaſily ſeen that the former had no intention to reclaim men, but merely to attract eſteem to themſelves, by pretending to contemn them; and that the only wiſh of the latter is to ſave them, and that he is little affected with their applauſes or eſteem.

Purſue the whole detail of his manners and of his conduct, and ſee if any righteous character hath ever appeared on the earth more generally exempted from all the moſt inſeparable weakneſſes of humanity. The more narrowly he is examined, the more is his ſanctity diſplayed. His diſciples, who have it beſt in their power to know him, are the moſt affected with the innocence of his life; and familiarity, ſo dangerous to the moſt heroical virtue, ſerves only in his to diſcover freſh matter of wonder. He ſpeaks only the language of Heaven: he never replies but when his anſwers may be uſeful towards the ſalvation of thoſe who interrogate him. We ſee not in him thoſe intervals, as I may ſay, in which the man re-appears: on every occaſion he is the meſſenger of the Moſt High. The commoneſt actions are extraordinary in him, through the novelty and the ſublimity of the diſpoſitions with which he accompanies them; and, when he eats with the phariſee, he does not appear a man leſs divine than when he raiſes up Lazarus. Surely, my brethren, nature alone could never lead human weakneſs ſo far; this is not a philoſopher who enjoins to others what he doth not himſelf, it is a righteous character who, in his own examples, adopts the rules and precepts of his doctrine; and holy muſt he indeed be, ſeeing the very diſciple who betrayed him, ſo

intereſted

intereſted to juſtify his own perfidy by an expoſure of his faults, renders public teſtimony, however, to his innocence and ſanctity ; and that the whole challenged malice of his enemies hath never been able to convict him of ſin.

Now, I ſay, that, if Jeſus Chriſt be holy, he is God ; and that, whether you ſhould conſider the doctrine which he hath taught us with reſpect to his Father or with reſpect to men, it is no longer but a maſs of equivocations or qualified blaſphemies, if he be only an ordinary man, merely deputed by God for the inſtruction of men.

I ſay, whether you ſhould conſider it with reſpect to his Father. In effect, if Jeſus Chriſt be but a ſimple Meſſenger of the Moſt High, he comes, then, for the ſole purpoſe of manifeſting to idolatrous nations the unity of the divine eſſence. But, beſides that his miſſion principally regards the Jews, who, for a long time paſt, had not returned to idolatry, and, conſequently, needed not that God ſhould raiſe up a prophet to reclaim them from an error of which they were not guilty, and a prophet whom they were taught from the beginning of the world to expect as the light of Iſrael, and the Redeemer of his people , and, beſides, in what manner doth Jeſus Chriſt fulfil his miniſtry, and what is his language with regard to the ſupreme Being ? Moſes and the prophets, charged with the ſame miſſion, never ceaſe to proclaim that the Lord was one and the ſame; that it was impious to compare him to the ſimilitude of the creature ; and that they themſelves were only his ſervants and meſſengers, vile inſtruments in the hands of a God, who, through them operated great things. No dubious expreſſion eſcapes from their mouth on ſo eſſential a point of their miſſion ; no compariſon of themſelves to to the ſupreme Being, always dangerous, in conſequence of

of the natural tendency of man to proſtitute his homages to men, and to raiſe up for himſelf palpable and viſible gods; no equivocal term which might have blended themſelves with the Lord, in whoſe name they ſpake, and have given birth to a ſuperſtition and an idolatry, to combat which they only came.

But, if Jeſus Chriſt be only a meſſenger ſuch as they were, with how much leſs fidelity doth he fulfil his miniſtry! He continually ſays that he is equal to his Father; he acquaints us, that he hath come down from heaven, and that he hath quitted the boſom of God; that he was before Abraham; that he was before all things, that the Father and he are one: that eternal life conſiſts in the knowledge of the Son, as well as in the knowledge of the Father; that whatever is done by the Father the Son alſo doth. Had any prophet, down to Jeſus Chriſt, ſpoken in a language ſo new, ſo ſtrange, ſo diſreſpectful towards the ſupreme God; and who, far from rendering glory to God as the author of every good gift, hath attributed to his own efficiency the great things which the Lord had deigned to operate through his miniſtry. Every where he compares himſelf to the ſovereign God; on one occaſion, indeed, he ſays that the Father is greater than he; but what language is that, if he be not himſelf a God manifeſted in fleſh? And would we not conſider as a fool any man who ſhould ſeriouſly tell us that the ſupreme Being is greater than he? Even to dare to compare himſelf with the divinity, is it not equalling himſelf to him? Is there any proportion either of greater or leſs betwixt God and man, betwixt the whole and nothing? But what do I ſay? Jeſus Chriſt is not content with ſaying that he is equal to God: he even juſtifies the novelty of theſe expreſſions againſt the murmurings of the Jews who are offended at them; far from clearly undeceiving

undeceiving them, he confirms them in the offence: on every occaſion he affects a language, which, unleſs cleared up and juſtified by his equality to his Father, becomes either fooliſh or impious. If he be not God, what came he to do upon the earth? He comes to ſcandaliſe the Jews, by giving them room to believe that he compares himſelf to the moſt High: he comes to ſeduce nations, by procuring to himſelf the adoration of the whole earth after his death: he comes to ſpread freſh obſcurity over the univerſe, and not, as he hath vaunted, to ſpread underſtanding, light, and the knowledge of God. What! my brethren, Paul and Barnabas rend their garments when they are taken for gods; they loudly proclaim to the people who wiſhed to offer up victims to them: Worſhip the Lord alone; whoſe ſervants and miniſters we are. The angel in the Revelation, when St. John proſtrates himſelf to worſhip him, rejects the homage with horror, and ſays to him: "Worſhip God alone; I am only thy fellow-ſervant, and "of thy brethren that have the teſtimony of Jeſus." And Jeſus Chriſt tranquilly ſuffers, that they render divine honours to him! And Jeſus Chriſt praiſes the faith of the diſciples who worſhip him, and who, with Thomas, call him their Lord and their God! And Jeſus Chriſt ever confutes his enemies who conteſt his divinity and divine origin! Is he then leſs zealous than his diſciples for the glory of him who ſends him? Or is it a matter of leſs importance to him pointedly to undeceive the people on a miſtake ſo injurious to the ſupreme Being, and which in fact, deſtroys the whole fruit of his miniſtry?

Yes, my brethren, what bleſſing hath the coming of Jeſus Chriſt brought to the world, if thoſe who worſhip him be idolatrous and profane? All who have believed in him have worſhipped him as the eternal Son of the Father, the

image of his ſubſtance, and the ſplendour of his glory. There is but a ſmall number of men in Chriſtianity, who, though they acknowledge him as a meſſenger of God, yet refuſe to him divine honours: even this ſect univerſally baniſhed, and execrable even in thoſe places where every error finds an aſylum, is reduced to a few obſcure and concealed followers; every where puniſhed as an impiety from the inſtant that it dares to avow itſelf; and forced to hide itſelf in obſcurity, and in the extremities of the moſt diſtant provinces and kingdoms. Is it, then, that numerous people of every tongue, of every tribe, and of every nation, which Jeſus Chriſt came to form upon the earth? Is it a Jeruſalem, formerly barren, and become fruitful, which was to contain tribes and nations in its boſom, and where the moſt diſtant iſles, princes, and kings, were to come to worſhip? Are theſe the grand advantages which the world was to reap from the miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt? Is this then, that abundance of grace, that plenitude of the ſpirit of God ſhed over all men, that univerſal regeneration, that ſpiritual and laſting reign which the prophets had foretold with ſuch majeſty, and which was to attend the coming of the Redeemer? What! my brethren, an expectation ſo magnificent is then reduced to the miſerable ſight of the world plunged into a new idolatry? That event, ſo bleſſed for the earth, promiſed for ſo many ages, announced with ſo much pomp, ſo earneſtly longed for by all the righteous, and held out from afar to the whole univerſe as its only reſource, was then to corrupt and to pervert it for ever? That church, ſo fruitful, of which kings and Ceſars, at the head of their people, were to be the children, was then to contain, in its boſom, only a ſmall number of men, equally odious to heaven and to the earth, the diſgrace of nature and of religion, and obliged to ſeek, in obſcurity, a ſhelter for the horror of

their

their blaſphemy? And all the future magnificence of the goſpel was then to be limited to the formation of the deteſtable ſect of an impious Socinus?

O God! how wiſe and reaſonable doth the faith of thy church appear, when oppoſed to the abſurd contradictions of unbelief! And how conſoling for thoſe who believe in Jeſus Chriſt, and who place their hope in him, to behold the abyſſes which pride digs for itſelf when it pretends to open new ways, and to ſap the only foundation of the faith and of the hope of Chriſtians.

Behold, my brethren, how the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt with relation to his Father, eſtabliſhes the glory of his eternal origin. Thus, when the prophets ſpeak of the God of heaven and of the earth, their expreſſions are too weak for the magnificence and the grandeur of their ideas. Full of the immenſity, the omnipotence, and the majeſty of the ſupreme Being, they exhauſt the weakneſs of the human language in order, if poſſible, to correſpond with the ſublimity of theſe images. That God, is he who meaſures the waters of the ocean in the hollow of his hand, who weighs the mountains in his balance, in whoſe hands are the thunders and the tempeſts, who ſpeaks and all is done; who amuſes himſelf in upholding the univerſe. It was natural for ſimple men to ſpeak in this manner of the glory of the moſt High; the infinite diſproportion betwixt the immenſity of the ſupreme Being and the weakneſs of the human mind muſt ſtrike, dazzle and confound it; and the moſt pompous expreſſions are too feeble to convey its aſtoniſhment and admiration.

But, when Jeſus Chriſt ſpeaks of the glory of the Lord, it is no longer in the pompous ſtile of the prophets; he calls

calls him an holy Father, a righteous Father, a merciful Father, a Shepherd who purſues a ſtrayed ſheep, and kindly bears it home himſelf; a Friend who yields to the importunities of his friend; a Father feelingly affected with the return and the amendment of his Son: it is clearly ſeen that this is a Child who ſpeaks a domeſtic language; that the familiarity and the ſimplicity of his expreſſions ſuppoſe in him a ſublimity of knowledge which renders the idea of the ſupreme Being familiar to him, and prevents him from being ſtruck and dazzled, as we are, with his majeſty and glory; and, laſtly, that he only ſpeaks of what is laid open to his view, and which he poſſeſſes himſelf. A perſon is much leſs ſtruck with the eclat of titles which he has borne, as I may ſay, from his birth: the children of kings ſpeak, without emotion, of ſceptres and crowns; and it is likewiſe the eternal Son alone of the living God who can ſpeak ſo familiarly of the glory of God himſelf.

Behold, my brethren, ſeeing we participate with Jeſus Chriſt in all his bleſſings, the right which he hath acquired for us, of conſidering God as our Father, of daring to call ourſelves his children, and of loving rather than of fearing him. Nevertheleſs, we ſerve him like ſlaves and heirlings: we dread his chaſtiſements; but we are little affected by his love and his promiſes: his law ſo righteous, ſo holy, has nothing pleaſing for us; it is a yoke which oppreſſes us, which excites our murmurs, and which we would ſoon free ourſelves from were our tranſgreſſions againſt it to go unpuniſhed: nothing is heard but complaints againſt the ſeverity of its precepts, but contentions in order to ſupport the propriety of thoſe ſoftenings which the world always mingles with their practice: in a word, were he not an avenging God we would never confeſs him; and it is to his juſtice and to his chaſtiſements alone that he is indebted for our reſpect and homages.

But

But the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, with relation to men, whom he came to inſtruct, doth not leſs eſtabliſh the truth of his divine birth. For I ſpeak not here of wiſdom, the ſanctity, and the ſublimity of that doctrine: in it, every thing is worthy of reaſon, and of the ſoundeſt philoſophy: every thing is proportioned to the wretchedneſs and to the excellency of man, to his wants and to his exalted lot; every thing there inſpires contempt for periſhable things, and the love of eternal riches: every thing maintains good order, and the peace and tranquillity of ſtates: every thing there is grand, becauſe every thing is true; the glory of the deeds is more real and more ſhining in the heart than the deeds themſelves. The wiſe man of the goſpel ſeeks, from his virtue here below, only the ſatisfaction of obeying God, who will one day amply recompenſe him for it, and he prefers the teſtimony of his own conſcience to all the applauſes of men: he is greater than the entire world, through his exalted faith; and he is below the leaſt of men, through the modeſty of his ſentiments. His virtue ſeeks not, in pride, the indemnity of its ſufferings; that is the firſt enemy which it attacks; and, in that divine philoſophy, the moſt heroical actions are nothing, from the moment that we count them as any thing ourſelves: it conſiders glory as an error, proſperity as a misfortune elevation as a precipice, afflictions as favours, the earth as a place of exilement, all that happens as a dream. What is this new language? What man prior to Jeſus Chriſt had ever ſpoken in this manner? And if his diſciples, merely in conſequence of having announced this divine doctrine, were taken by a whole people for gods deſcended upon the earth, what worſhip ſhall they have it in their power to refuſe to him who is the author of it, and in whoſe name they announce it?

But

But, let us leave theſe general reflections, and come to the more preciſe duties of that love and dependance which his doctrine exacts of men with regard to himſelf. He commands us to love him, as he commands us to love his Father: he inſiſts that we dwell in him, that is to ſay, that we eſtabliſh ourſelves in him, that we ſeek our happineſs in him, as in his Father; that we direct all our actions, all our thoughts, all our deſires, that we direct ourſelves to his glory, as to the glory of his Father; ſins themſelves are not remitted but to thoſe who ſincerely love him; and all the righteouſneſs of the juſt, and the reconciliation of the ſinner, are the effects of the love which we have for him, What is the man who comes to uſurp the place of God in our hearts? Is a creature worthy of being loved for itſelf, and every noble and eſtimable quality which it may poſſeſs, is it not the ſole gift of him who alone is worthy of all love?

What prophet prior to Jeſus Chriſt had ever ſpoken thus to men: You ſhall love me; whatever you do, you ſhall do it for my glory. You ſhall love the Lord your God, ſaid Moſes to the children of Iſrael. Nothing is amiable in itſelf but what can beſtow happineſs upon us: now, no creature can be our happineſs or our perfection: no creature, conſequently, is worthy of being loved for itſelf; it would be an idolatry. Any man, who comes to propoſe himſelf to men as the object of their love, is impious, and an impoſtor who ſeeks to uſurp the moſt eſſential right of the ſupreme Being: he is a monſter of pride and folly, who wants to erect altars to himſelf, even in hearts, the only ſanctuary which the divinity had never yielded up to profane idols. The doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, that doctrine ſo divine, and ſo much admired even by the pagans, would no longer, in that caſe, be but a monſtrous

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mixture of impiety, of preſumption, and of folly, if, not being himſelf the God bleſſed in all ages, he had made that love which he exacted of his diſciples, the moſt eſſential precept of his morality; and it would be a ridiculous mark of oſtentation in him, to have held himſelf out to men as a model of humility and modeſty, while, in fact, he was carrying preſumption and unlimited compliance to a degree far beyond all the proudeſt philoſophers, who had never aſpired to more than the eſteem and the applauſes of men.

Nor is this all: not only Jeſus Chriſt inſiſts that we love him, but he alſo exacts of men marks of the moſt diſintereſted and moſt heroical love. He inſiſts that we love him more than our relations, than our friends, than our fortune, than our life, than the whole world, than ourſelves; that we ſuffer all for his ſake, that we renounce all for him, that we ſhed, even to the laſt drop of our blood for him: whoever renders not to him theſe grand homages, is unworthy of him: whoever puts him in competition with any creature, or with himſelf, inſults and diſhonours him, and forfeits every pretenſion to his promiſes.

What! my brethren, he is not ſatisfied, as the idols, and even the true God himſelf had appeared to be, with the ſacrifices of goats and bulls? He carries his pretenſions ſtill further, and requires of man the ſacrifice of himſelf; that he fly to gibbets; that he offer himſelf to death and to martyrdom for the glory of his name! But, if he be not the Maſter of our life, by what right doth he exact it of us? If our our ſoul be not originally come from him, is it to him that we ought to return it? Is that regaining it, to have loſt it for his ſake? If he be not the Author of our being, do we not become ſacrilegious and murderers

derers when we ſacrifice ourſelves for his glory, and when we transfer to a creature, and to a ſimple meſſenger of God the grand ſacrifice of our being, ſolely deſtined to confeſs the ſovereignty and the power of the eternal Maker, who hath drawn us from nothing? That Jeſus Chriſt die himſelf, well and good, for the glory of God, and even that he exhorts us to follow his example; many prophets before him had died for the Lord's ſake, and had exhorted their diſciples to walk in their ſteps. But that Jeſus Chriſt, if he be not God himſelf, ſhould order us to die for himſelf, ſhould exact of men that laſt proof of love; that he ſhould command us to offer up a life for him which we hold not of him; is it poſſible that men ſhould have ever exiſted upon the earth ſo vulgar and ſo ſtupid as to allow themſelves to be led away by the extravagance of ſuch a doctrine? Is it poſſible that maxims ſo ridiculous and ſo impious ſhould have been able to triumph over the whole univerſe, to overthrow all ſects, to recal all minds, and to prevail over every thing which had hitherto appeared exalted, either in learning, in doctrine, or in the wiſdom of the earth? And, if we conſider as barbarians thoſe ſavage nations who make a ſacrifice of themſelves upon the tombs and aſhes of their relations and friends, why ſhould we view, in a more reſpectable light, thoſe diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt who have ſacrificed themſelves for his ſake? And ſhall not his religion be equally a religion of barbarity and of blood?

Yes, my brethren, the Agnes', the Lucias, the Agathas, thoſe firſt martyrs of faith and of modeſty, would then have ſacrificed themſelves to a mortal man? And, in preferring to ſhed their blood rather than to bend the knee before vain idols, they would have ſhunned one idolatry only in order to fall into another more comdemnable, in dying

for

for Jeſus Chriſt? The generous avowers of faith would then have been only a ſet of deſperate and fanatical men, who, like madmen, had run to death? The tradition of the martyrs would then be no longer but the liſt of an impious and bloody ſcene? The tyrants and perſecutors would then have been the defenders of righteouſneſs, and of the glory of the divinity? Chriſtianity itſelf a ſacrilegious and profane ſect? The human race would then have totally erred? And the blood of the martyrs, far from having been the ſeed of believers, would have anſwered the ſole purpoſe of inundating the whole univerſe with ſuperſtition and idolatry? O God! can the ear of man liſten to ſuch blaſphemies without horror? And what more is neceſſary to overthrow unbelief than to ſhew it to itſelf?

Such are our firſt duties towards Jeſus Chriſt; to ſacrifice to him our inclinations, our friends, our relations, our fortune, our life itſelf, and, in a word, whatever may ſtand in the way of our ſalvation; it is to confeſs his divinity; it is to acknowledge that he alone can ſupply the place of all that we forſake for him, and render to us even more than we quit, by giving to us himſelf. It is he alone, ſays the apoſtle John, who contemns the world and all its pleaſures, who confeſſes that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God, becauſe he thereby pronounces that Jeſus Chriſt is greater than the world, more capable of rendering us happy, and conſequently more worthy of our love.

But it is not ſufficient to have conſidered the ſpirit of the miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt in his doctrine; it is neceſſary to conſider it, ſecondly, in the ſpecial favours and bleſſings which the univerſe has received from him. He came to deliver all men from eternal death; from enemies of God, as they were, he hath rendered them his children: he hath

ſecured to them the poſſeſſion of the kingdom of God, and of immutable riches; he hath brought to them the knowledge of ſalvation and the doctrine of truth. Theſe gifts, ſo magnificent, have not ended even with him; ſeated on the right hand of his Father, he ſtill ſheds them over our hearts; all our miſeries ſtill find their remedy in him: he nouriſhes us with his body; he waſhes us from our ſtains by continually applying to us the price of his blood; he forms paſtors to conduct us; he inſpires prophets to inſtruct us; he ſanctifies righteous characters to animate us by their example; he is continually preſent in our hearts to comfort all their wants: man hath no paſſion which his grace doth not cure, no affliction which it doth not render pleaſing, no power but what ſprings from him; in a word, he aſſures us himſelf that he is our way, our truth, our life, our righteouſneſs, our redemption, our light. What new doctrine is this? Can a ſingle man be the ſource of ſo many benefits to other men? Can the ſovereign God, ſo jealous of his glory, attach us to a creature, by duties and ties ſo intimate and ſacred, that we depend almoſt more upon that creature than upon himſelf? Would there be no danger that a man, become ſo beneficial and ſo neceſſary to other men, ſhould at laſt become their idol? That a man, author and diſpenſer of ſo many bleſſings, and who diſcharges, with regard to us, the office and all the functions of a god, ſhould likewiſe in a little time, occupy his place in our hearts?

For obſerve, my brethren, that it is gratitude alone which hath formerly made ſo many gods. Men, neglecting the Author of their being and of the univerſe, worſhipped, at firſt, the air which enabled them to live, the earth which nouriſhed them, the ſun which gave them light, and the moon which preſided over the night: ſuch were

were their Cybeles, their Apollos, their Dianas. They worſhipped thoſe conquerors who had delivered them from their enemies; thoſe benevolent and upright princes who had rendered their ſubjects happy, and the memory of their immortal reign; and Jupiter and Hercules were placed in the rank of gods, the one for the number of his victories, and the other in conſequence of the happineſs and tranquillity of his reign: in the ages of ſuperſtition and credulity, men knew no other gods than thoſe who were ſerviceable to them. And ſuch is the character of man; his worſhip is but his love and his gratitude.

Now, what man hath ever benefited mankind ſo much as Jeſus Chriſt? Recollect all that the pagan ages have told us of the hiſtory of their gods, and ſee if they believed themſelves indebted to them what unbelief itſelf acknowledges, with the holy books, the world to be indebted to Jeſus Chriſt. To ſome they thought themſelves indebted for favourable winds and a fortunate navigation; to others for the fertility of ſeaſons; to their Mars for ſucceſs in battle; to their Janus for the peace and the tranquillity of the people; to Eſculapius for their health.—But what are theſe weak benefits, if you compare them to thoſe which Jeſus Chriſt hath ſhowered upon the earth? He hath brought to it an eternal peace, a laſting happineſs, righteouſneſs and truth; he hath made of it a new world and a new earth; he hath not loaded a ſingle people with his benefits, he hath loaded all nations, the whole univerſe; and what is more, he hath become our benefactor only by ſuffering as our victim. What could he do more exalted or more noble for the earth? If gratitude hath made gods, could Jeſus Chriſt fail to find worſhippers among men? And, were it poſſible that any exceſs could take place in our love and in our gratitude to

him,

him, was it at all proper that we ſhould be ſo deeply indebted to him?

Again, if Jeſus Chriſt, in dying, had informed his diſciples that to the Lord alone they were indebted for ſo many benefits, that he himſelf had been merely the inſtrument, and not the author and ſource of all theſe ſpecial favours, and that they ought, conſequently, to forget him, and to render to God that glory which was due to him alone: but very differently than with ſuch inſtructions doth Jeſus Chriſt terminate his wonders and his miniſtry. He not only requires that his diſciples forget him not, and that they do not ceaſe, even after his death, to hope in him; but, on the point of quitting them, he aſſures them that, even to the conſummation of time, he will be preſent with them; he promiſes ſtill more than he hath already beſtowed upon them, and attaches them for ever to himſelf by indiſſoluble and immortal ties.

In effect, the promiſes which, in that laſt moment, he makes to them, are ſtill more aſtoniſhing than all the favours he had granted to them during his life. In the *firſt* place, he promiſes to them the conſoling Spirit, which he calls the Spirit of his Father; that Spirit of the truth which the world cannot receive; that Spirit of energy which was to form the martyrs; that Spirit of intelligence which was to enlighten the prophets; that Spirit of wiſdom which was to conduct the paſtors; that Spirit of peace and of charity which, of all believers, was to make only one heart and one ſoul. What right hath Jeſus Chriſt over the Spirit of God, to diſpoſe of it at his pleaſure, and to promiſe it to men, if it be not his own Spirit; Elijah, aſcending to heaven, looks upon it as a thing hardly poſſible to promiſe to Eliſeus, individually, his twofold

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ſpirit of zeal and prophecy: how far was he from promiſing to him the eternal Spirit of the heavenly Father, that Spirit of liberty which agitates where he thinks fit! Nevertheleſs, the promiſes of Jeſus Chriſt are accompliſhed; ſcarcely hath he aſcended to heaven when the Spirit of God deſcends upon the diſciples; the illiterate become at once more learned than all the ſages and philoſophers; the weak more powerful than the tyrants; the fooliſh, according to the world, more prudent than all the wiſdom of the age. New men, animated with a new Spirit, appear upon the earth; they attract all to walk in their ſteps: they change the face of the univerſe; and, even to the end of ages, ſhall that Spirit animate his church, form righteous ſouls, overthrow the unbelieving, conſole his diſciples, ſuſtain them amid perſecutions and diſgraces, and ſhall bear witneſs in the bottom of their heart that they are children of God, and that they are entitled, through that auguſt title, to more real and more ſolid riches than all thoſe of which the world can ever deſpoil them.

Secondly, Jeſus Chriſt promiſes to his diſciples the keys of heaven and of hell, and the power of remitting ſins. What! my brethren, the Jews are deeply offended when he pretends to remit them himſelf, and when he ſeems to attribute to himſelf a power reſerved to God alone; but, how will all nations of the earth be ſcandaliſed when they ſhall read, in his goſpel, that he hath even delegated this power to his diſciples? And, if he be not God, hath the mind of man ever imagined ſuch an inſtance of temerity and folly? What right, in effect, hath he over conſciences, to bind or to unbind them at his pleaſure, and to transfer to weak men a power which he himſelf could not exerciſe without blaſphemy.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, But this is not all; he promiſes to his diſciples the gift likewiſe of miracles; that, in his name, they ſhould raiſe up the dead; that they ſhould reſtore ſight to the blind, health to the ſick, and ſpeech to the dumb; that they ſhould be maſters of all nature. Moſes promiſes not to his diſciples the gifts with which the Lord had favoured him: he is ſenſible that the power is not his own, and that the Lord alone can beſtow it on whomſoever he may think fit. Thus, after his death when Joſhua arreſts the ſun in the middle of his courſe, in order to complete the victory over the enemies of the people of God, it is not in the name of Moſes that he commands that planet to ſtand ſtill; it is not of him that he holds the power of making even the ſtars obedient to him; when he wiſhes to exerciſe it, it is not to him that he addreſſes himſelf: but the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt can operate nothing but in the name of their Maſter; it is in his name that they raiſe up the dead and make the lame to walk; and, without the aſſiſtance of that divine name, they are equally weak as the reſt of men. The miniſtry and the power of Moſes terminate with his life; the miniſtry and the power of Jeſus Chriſt only begin, as I may ſay, after his death, and we are aſſured that his reign is to be eternal.

What more ſhall I ſay? He promiſes to his diſciples the converſion of the univerſe, the triumph of the croſs, the compliance of all the nations of the earth, of philoſophers, of Ceſars, of tyrants; and that his goſpel ſhall be received by the whole world: but, doth he hold the hearts of all men in his hands thus to anſwer for a change of which the world had hitherto had no example? You will, no doubt, tell us, that God layeth open the future to his ſervant. But you are miſtaken: if he be not God, he is not even a prophet; his predictions are dreams and chimeras:

ras: it is a falſe ſpirit which ſeduces him, and which is concerned in his knowledge of the future, and the ſequel hath belied the truth of his promiſes: he prophecies that all nations, ſeated under the ſhadow of death, ſhall open their eyes to the light; and he ſees not that they are on the point of falling into a more criminal blindneſs in worſhipping him: he prophecies that his Father ſhall be glorified, and that his goſpel ſhall every where form to him worſhippers in ſpirit and in truth; and he ſees not that men are going for ever to diſhonour him, in placing upon an equality with him, even to the end of ages, that Jeſus who ought to have been conſidered only as his ſervant and prophet: he prophecies that idols ſhall be overthrown; and he ſees not that he himſelf ſhall occupy their place: he prophecies that he will form to himſelf an holy people of every tongue and of every tribe; and he ſees not that he comes only to form a new people of idolaters of every nation, who ſhall place him in the temple as the living God; whoſe actions, worſhip, and homages ſhall all be directed to him; who ſhall do all for his glory; who ſhall depend ſolely upon him, live only for and through him, and have neither force nor energy but what they receive from him: in a word who ſhall worſhip him, who ſhall love him a thouſand times more ſpiritually, more intimately, and more univerſally, than ever the pagans had worſhipped their idols. This, then, is not even a prophet; and his relations, according to the fleſh, are guilty of no blaſphemy when they ſay "he is beſide himſelf," and that he beſtows, on the dreams of an heated imagination, all the weight and reality of revelations and myſteries.

Behold to what unbelief conducts. Overturn the foundation, which is the Lord Jeſus, eternal Son of the living God, and the whole edifice tumbles in pieces: take away the grand myſtery of piety, and all the religion is but a dream:

dream: deny the divinity of Jeſus Chriſt, and you cut off, from the doctrine of Chriſtians, all the merit of faith, all the conſolation of hope, all the motives of charity. Thus, with what zeal did not the firſt diſciples of the goſpel oppoſe thoſe impious men who, from that time, ventured to attack the glory of their Maſter's divinity? They well knew that it was ſtriking at the heart of their religion; that it was raviſhing from them the only alleviation of their perſecutions and ſufferings, all confidence in the promiſes to come, and all the dignity and grandeur of their pretenſions; and that, that principle once overthrown, the whole religion diſſipated in ſmoke, and was no longer but a human doctrine and the ſect of a mortal man, who like all other chiefs, had left nothing but his name to his diſciples.

Thus, the pagans themſelves then reproached the Chriſtians with rendering divine honours to their Chriſt. Pliny, a Roman proconſul celebrated for his works, giving an account to the emperor Trajan of their morals and doctrine; after being forced to confeſs that the Chriſtians were pious, innocent, and upright men, and that they aſſembled before the riſing of the ſun, not to concert the commiſſion of crimes, or to diſturb the peace of the empire, but to live in piety and righteouſneſs, to deteſt frauds, adulteries, and even the coveting of the wealth of others; he only reproaches them with chaunting hymns in honour of their Chriſt, and of rendering to him the ſame homages as to a god. Now, if theſe firſt believers had not rendered divine honours to Jeſus Chriſt, they would have juſtified themſelves againſt that calumny; they would have rejected that ſcandal from their religion, almoſt the only one which ſhocked the zeal of the Jews and the wiſdom of the Gentiles: they would openly have ſaid: We do not worſhip Jeſus Chriſt; for we know better than to transfer to a creature

creature that honour and worſhip which are due to God alone. Nevertheleſs, they make no reply to this accuſation. Their apologiſts refute all the other calumnies with which the pagans endeavoured to blacken their doctrine; they clear up and overthrow the ſlighteſt accuſations; and their apologies, addreſſed to the ſenate, attract to them even the admiration of Rome, and impoſe ſilence on their enemies. And, upon the accuſation of idolatry towards Jeſus Chriſt, which ſhould be the moſt crying and the moſt horrible; upon the reproach of worſhipping a crucified perſon, which was the moſt likely to diſcredit them, and which ought indeed to have been the moſt grievous to men ſo holy, ſo declared againſt idolatry, and ſo jealous of the glory of God, they are totally ſilent; and, far from defending themſelves, they even juſtify the accuſation by their ſilence: What do I ſay, by their ſilence? They authoriſe it by their language in profeſſing to ſuffer for his name, in dying for him, in confeſſing him before the tyrants, in joyfully expiring upon gibbets, in the ſweet expectation of going to enjoy him, and of receiving, in his boſom, a more immortal life than that which they had loſt for his glory. They ſuffered martyrdom rather than bend to the ſtatue of the Ceſars, rather than allow their pagan friends, through a human compaſſion, and to ſave them from torture, to falſely atteſt, before the magiſtrates, that they had offered incenſe to the idols, and they would have ſubmitted to the accuſation of paying divine honours to Jeſus Chriſt, without any attempt to deſtroy the imputation? Ah! they would have proclaimed the contrary from the houſe tops; they would have expoſed themſelves even to death, rather than to have given room to ſo hateful and ſo execrable a ſuſpicion. What can unbelief oppoſe to this? And if it be an error to equal Jeſus Chriſt to God, it is an error which has been born with the church, and upon which the whole

ſtructure hath been reared; which has formed ſo many martyrs, and converted the whole univerſe.

But what fruit, my brethren, are we to draw from this diſcourſe? That Jeſus Chriſt is the grand object of Chriſtian piety. Nevertheleſs, ſcarcely do we know Jeſus Chriſt: we never conſider that all the other practices of piety are, as I may ſay, arbitrary; but, this is the ground-work of faith and of ſalvation; that this is pure and ſincere piety; that, continually to meditate upon Jeſus Chriſt, to have recourſe to him, to nouriſh ourſelves with his doctrine, to enter into the ſpirit of his myſteries, to ſtudy his actions, to count ſolely upon the merit of his blood and of his ſacrifice, is the only true knowledge, and the moſt eſſential duty of the believer. Remember then, my brethren, that piety towards Jeſus Chriſt is the cordial ſpirit of the Chriſtian religion; that nothing is ſolid but what you ſhall build upon that foundation; and that the principal homage which he expects of you is, that you become like him, and that his life be the model of your own, in order that, through your reſemblance to him, you may be included in the number of thoſe who ſhall be partakers of his glory.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS.

JOHN xi. 34.

Come and ſee.

THE moſt hardened ſinner could never ſubmit to the horror of his ſituation, were he able to ſee and to know himſelf ſuch as he is. A ſoul, grown old in guilt, is only bearable to itſelf, becauſe that the ſame paſſion, from which all his miſeries ſpring, conceals them from him, and that his diſorder is, at the ſame time, both the weapon which inflicts the wound, and the fatal bandage which hides it from the eys of the patient.

Behold wherefore the church, in order to lay the ſinner open to himſelf during this time of penitence, almoſt continually diſplays to us, under various images, the deplorable ſtate of a ſoul who has grown old in his iniquity: one while under the figure of a paralytic young man; that is, to mark to us the inſenſibility and fatal eaſe which always follow habitual guilt: another, under the ſymbol of a prodigal reduced to feed with the vileſt animals; and, under theſe traits, it wiſhes to make us feel his abaſement and his infamy: again, under the image of a perſon born blind; and that is in order to paint to us the depth and the horror of his

his blindneſs: and, laſtly, under the parable of a deaf and dumb perſon poſſeſſed with a devil; and that is, more animatedly to figure to us the ſubjection under which habitual guilt holds all the powers of an unfortunate ſoul.

To day, in order as it were, to aſſemble all theſe traits under a ſingle image ſtill more terrible and ſtriking, the church propoſes to us Lazarus in the tomb, dead for four days, emitting ſtench and infection, bound hand and foot, his face covered with a napkin, and exciting only horror even in thoſe whom affection and blood had moſt cloſely united to him in life.

Come then and ſee, you, my dear hearer, who live, for ſo many years paſt, under the ſhameful yoke of diſſipation, and who are inſenſible to the miſery of your ſituation. Approach this tomb which the voice of Jeſus Chriſt is now to open before your eyes; and, in that ſpectacle of infection and putrefaction, behold the true picture of your ſoul. You fly to profane ſpectacles, in order to ſee your paſſions repreſented under pleaſing and deceitful colours: approach, and ſee them expreſſed here ſuch as they are: come, and, in that infectious and ſtinking carcaſe, behold what you are in the ſight of God, and how much your ſituation is worthy of your tears.

But, in expoſing here only the horrible ſituation of a ſoul who lives in diſorder, leſt I trouble and diſcourage, without holding out to him a hand in order to aſſiſt him in quitting that abyſs; that I may omit nothing of our goſpel, I ſhall divide it into three reflections: in the firſt, you will ſee how ſhocking and deplorable is the ſituation of a ſoul who lives in habitual irregularity; in the ſecond, I ſhall ſhew to you the means by which he may quit it; and, in the third, what

what the motives are which determine Jeſus Chriſt to operate the miracle of his reſurrection and deliverance. O my God! let thine all-powerful voice be now heard by thoſe unfortunate ſouls who ſleep in the darkneſs and ſhadow of death; command theſe withered bones once more to be animated, and to recover that light and that life of grace which they have loſt.

Reflection I. I remark, at firſt, three principal circumſtances in the deplorable ſpectacle which Lazarus, dead and buried, offers to our eyes. *1ſtly*, Already become a maſs of worms and corruption, he ſpreads infection and ſtench: and behold the profound corruption of a ſoul in habitual ſin. *2dly*, A gloomy napkin covers his eyes and his face: and behold the fatal blindneſs of a ſoul in habitual ſin. *Laſtly*, He appears in the tomb bound hand and foot: and behold the melancholy ſubjection of a ſoul in habitual ſin. Now, it is that profound corruption, that fatal blindneſs, and that melancholy ſervitude, typified in the ſpectacle of Lazarus, dead and buried, which preciſely form all the horror and all the wretchedneſs of a ſoul long dead in the eyes of God.

In the firſt place, there is not a more natural image of a ſoul grown old in iniquity, than that of a carcaſe already a prey to worms and putrefaction. Thus the holy books every where repreſent the ſtate of ſin under the idea of a ſhocking death; and it ſeems as if the Spirit of God had found that melancholy image the moſt calculated to give us, at leaſt, a glimpſe of all the deformity of a ſoul in which ſin dwells.

Now, two effects are produced on the body by death: it deprives it of life; it afterwards alters all its features, and corrupts

corrupts all its members. It deprives it of life; in the ſame manner it is that ſin begins to diſfigure the beauty of the ſoul. For, God is the life of our ſouls, the light of our minds, and the ſpring, as I may ſay, of our hearts. Our righteouſneſs, our wiſdom, our truth, are only the union of a righteous, wiſe, and true God with our ſoul: all our virtues are only the different influences of his Spirit which dwells within us: it is he who exciteth our good deſires, who formeth our holy thoughts, who produceth our pure lights, who operateth our righteous propenſities; inſomuch that all the ſpiritual and ſupernatural life of our ſoul is only, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, the life of God within us.

Now, by a ſingle ſin that life ceaſes, that light is extinguiſhed, that ſpirit withdraws, all theſe ſprings are ſuſpended. Thus the ſoul, without God, is a ſoul without life, without motion, light, truth, righteouſneſs, or charity; it is no longer but a chaos, a dead body: its life is no longer but an imaginary and chimerical life; and, like thoſe inanimate ſubſtances ſet in motion by a foreign influence, it ſeems to live and to act; but "it is dead while living."

Behold the firſt degree of death which every ſin that ſeparates a ſoul from God introduces into it; but habitual ſin, like inveterate death, goes further. Thus, Lazarus not only is without life in the tomb, but, having been there for four days, the corruption of his body begins to ſpread infection. For although the firſt ſin, which cauſes the loſs of grace, leave us, in the eyes of God, without life and without motion; yet we may ſay, that certain impreſſions of the Holy Spirit, certain ſeeds of ſpiritual life, certain means of recovering the grace loſt, ſtill remain to us. Faith is not yet extinguiſhed; the feelings of virtue not yet

yet effaced; a ſenſe of the truths of ſalvation not yet loſt: it is a dead body in truth; but, life being only juſt withdrawn, it ſtill preſerves, I know not what, of marks of warmth, which ſeem to ſpring from ſome remain of life. But, in proportion as the ſoul remains in death, and perſeveres in guilt, grace withdraws; all extinguiſhes, all changes, all corrupts, and its corruption becomes univerſal.

I ſay univerſal; yes, my brethren, all changes, all corrupts in the ſoul, through a continuance of diſorder; the gifts of nature, gentleneſs, rectitude, humanity, modeſty, even the mental talents; the bleſſings of grace, the feelings of religion, the remorſes of conſcience, the terrors of faith, and faith itſelf; the corruption penetrates all, and changes, into putrefaction and a ſpectacle of horror, both the gifts of heaven and the bleſſings of the earth: nothing remains in its original ſituation; the loveliеſt features are thoſe which become the moſt hideous and the moſt undiſtinguiſhable; the charms of wit become the ſeaſoning of debauchery and the paſſions; feelings of religion are changed into free-thinking; ſuperiority of knowledge into pride, and a vain and ſhocking philoſophy; nobility of mind is no longer but a boundleſs ambition; generoſity and tenderneſs of heart but a yielding to the ſway of impure and profane connections; the principles of glory and honour, handed down to us with the blood of our anceſtors, but a vain oſtentation, and the ſource of all our hatreds and animoſities; our rank, our elevation, the cauſe of our envies and mean jealouſies; laſtly, our riches and our proſperity, the fatal inſtrument of all our crimes.

But the corruption is not confined to the ſinner alone; a dead body cannot be long concealed without a ſmell of death being ſpread around; it is impoſſible to live long in debauchery

debauchery without the ſmell of a bad life making itſelf felt. In vain is every precaution employed to conceal the ignominy of a diſorderly life; in vain is the ſepulchre, full of putrefaction and infection, externally whitened and embelliſhed, the ſtench ſpreads; guilt, ſooner or later betrays itſelf; a black and infectious air always proceeds from that profane fire which, with ſo much care was concealed. A diſorderly life betrays itſelf in a thouſand ways; the public, at laſt undeceived, opens its eyes, and the more their character becomes blown, the more they diſcover themſelves; they become accuſtomed to their ſhame; they become weary of conſtraint and decency: that guilt, which is only to be purchaſed with attention and arrangements, appears too dear; they unmaſk themſelves; they throw off that remainder of reſtraint and modeſty which made us ſtill cautious of the eyes of men; they wiſh to riot in diſorder, without precaution or care; and, then, ſervants, friends, connections, the city and country, all feel the infection of their irregularities and example. Our rank, our elevation, no longer ſerve but to render more ſtriking and more durable the ſcandal of our debaucheries: in a thouſand places our exceſſes ſerve as a model: the view of our manners perhaps ſtrengthens, in ſecret, conſciences whom guilt ſtill rendered uneaſy; perhaps they even cite us, and make uſe of our example in ſeducing innocence, and in conquering a ſtill timorous modeſty: and, even after our death, the fame of our debaucheries ſhall ſtain the hiſtory of men; ſhall perhaps embelliſh laſcivious tales; and, long after our day, in ages yet to come, the remembrance of our crimes ſhall ſtill be an occaſion and a ſource of guilt.

Laſtly, But I would not dare to enlarge here, the corruption which habitual guilt ſheds through the whole interior of the ſinner is ſo univerſal, that even his body is infected:

debauchery

debauchery leaves the ſhameful marks of his irregularities on his fleſh: the infection of his ſoul often extends even to a body which he has made ſubſervient to ignominy. He ſays; in advance to corruption, like Job, "thou art my "father; and to the worm, thou art my mother and my "ſiſter:" the corruption of his body is a ſhocking picture of that of his ſoul.

Great God! can I then flatter myſelf that thou wilt yet caſt upon me ſome looks of compaſſion! Wilt thou not groan at the ſight of that maſs of crimes and putrefaction which my ſoul preſents to thine eyes, as thou now groaneſt in the ſpirit over the tomb of Lazarus? Ah! avert thine holy eyes from the ſpectacle of my profound wretchedneſs; but, let me no more turn away from it myſelf, and let me be enabled to view myſelf with all that horror which my ſituation deſerves: tear aſunder the veil which hides me from myſelf; my evils ſhall, in part, be done away from the moment that I ſhall be able to ſee and to know them.

And behold the ſecond circumſtance of the deplorable ſituation of Lazarus; a mournful cloth covers his face: that is the profound blindneſs which forms the ſecond character of habitual ſin.

I confeſs that every ſin is an error which makes us miſtake evil for good; it is a falſe judgment which makes us ſeek, in the creature, that eaſe, grandeur, and independence which we can find in God alone: it is a miſt which hides order, truth, and righteouſneſs from our eyes, and, in their place, ſubſtitutes vain phantoms. Nevertheleſs, a firſt falling off from God does not altogether extinguiſh our lights; nor is it always productive of total darkneſs.

It is true that the ſpirit of God, ſource of all light, retires, and no longer dwells within us; but ſome traces of light are ſtill left in the ſoul: thus, the ſun already withdrawn from our hemiſphere, yet certain rays of his light ſtill tinge the ſky, and form as it were, an imperfect day; it is only in proportion as he ſinks that gloom gains, and the darkneſs of night at laſt prevails. In the ſame manner, in proportion as ſin degenerates into habit, the light of God retires, darkneſs gains, and the profound night of total blindneſs at laſt arrives.

And then all becomes occaſion of error to the criminal ſoul; all changes its aſpect to his eyes; the moſt ſhameful paſſions no longer appear but as weakneſſes; the moſt criminal attachments but ſympathies brought with us into the world and inherent to our hearts; the exceſſes of the table but innocent pleaſures of ſociety; revenge but a juſt ſenſe of injury; licentious and impious converſations but lively and agreeable ſallies; the blackeſt defamation but a cuſtomary language of which none but weak and timid minds can make a ſcruple; the laws of the church but old-faſhioned cuſtoms: the ſeverity of God's judgments but abſurd declamations which equally diſgrace his goodneſs and mercy; death in ſin, inevitable conſequence of a criminal life, mere predictions, in which there is more of zeal than of truth, and refuted by the confidence which a return to God, previous to that laſt moment, promiſes to us; laſtly, heaven, the earth, hell, all creatures, religion, crimes, virtues, good and evil, things preſent and to come, all change their aſpect to the eyes of a ſoul who lives in habitual guilt; all ſhew themſelves under falſe appearances; his whole life is no longer but a deluſion and a continued error. Alas! could you tear away the fatal veil which covers your eyes, like thoſe of Lazarus, and behold your-

ſelf,

ſelf, like him, buried in darkneſs; all covered with putrefaction, and ſpreading around infection and a ſmell of death! But now, ſays our Saviour, all theſe things are hid from thine eyes; you ſee in yourſelf only the embelliſhments and the pompous externals of the fatal tomb in which you drag on in ſin; your rank, your birth, your talents, your dignities, your titles; that is to ſay, the trophies and the ornaments which the vanity of men has there raiſed up; but, remove the ſtone which covers that place of horror; look within, judge not of yourſelf from theſe pompous outſides, which ſerve only to embelliſh your carcaſe; ſee what, in the eyes of God, you are; and, if the corruption and the profound blindneſs of your ſoul touch you not, let its ſlavery at leaſt rouſe and recal you to yourſelf.

Laſt circumſtance of the ſituation of Lazarus dead and buried; he was bound hand and foot; and behold the image of the wretched ſlavery of a ſoul long under the dominion of ſin.

Yes, my brethren, in vain does the world decry a Chriſtian life as a life of ſubjection and ſlavery; the reign of righteouſneſs is a reign of liberty; the ſoul, faithful and ſubmiſſive to God, becomes maſter over all creatures; the juſt man is above all, becauſe he is unconnected with all; he is maſter of the world, becauſe he deſpiſes the world; he is dependent neither on his maſters, becauſe he only ſerves them for God; nor on his friends, becauſe he only loves them according to the order of charity and of righteouſneſs; nor on his inferiors, becauſe he exacts from them no iniquitous compliance; nor on his fortune, becauſe he rather dreads it; nor on the judgments of men, becauſe he dreads thoſe of God alone; nor on events, becauſe he

conſiders

conſiders them all as in the order of providence; nor even on his paſſions, becauſe the charity which is within him is their rule and meaſure. The juſt man alone, then, enjoys a perfect liberty: ſuperior to the world, to himſelf, to all creatures, to all events, he begins, even in this life, to reign with Jeſus Chriſt; all is below him, while he is himſelf inferior to God alone.

But the ſinner, who ſeems to live without either rule or reſtraint, is, however, a vile ſlave; he is dependant on all, on his body, on his propenſities, on his caprices, on his paſſions, on his fortune, on his maſters, on his friends, on his enemies, on his rivals, on all ſurrounding creatures; ſo many gods to which love or fear ſubject him; ſo many idols which multiply his ſlavery, while he thinks himſelf more free by caſting off that obedience which he owes to God alone; he multiplies his maſters, by refuſing ſubmiſſion to him alone who renders free thoſe who ſerve him, and who gives to his ſervants dominion over the world and over every thing which the world contains.

You often complain, my dear hearer, of the hardſhips of virtue; you dread a Chriſtian life, as a life of ſubjection and ſorrow; but what, in it, could you find ſo gloomy as you experience in debauchery? Ah! If you durſt complain of the bitterneſs and of the tyranny of the paſſions; if you durſt confeſs the troubles, the diſguſts, the frenzies, the anxieties of your ſoul; if you were candid on the gloomy tranſactions of your heart, there is no lot but what would appear preferable to your own; but you diſguiſe the inquietudes of guilt which you feel; and you exaggerate the hardſhips of virtue which you have never known. But, in order to hold out to you an aſſiſting hand, let us continue the hiſtory of our goſpel, and let us ſee, in the reſurrection

reſurrection of Lazarus, what are the means offered to you, by the goodneſs of God, of quitting ſo deplorable a ſituation.

REFLECTION II. The power of God, ſays the apoſtle, is leſs conſpicuous in the converſion of ſinners than in raiſing up the dead; and the ſame ſupernatural power which wrought upon Jeſus Chriſt to deliver him from the tomb, ought to operate upon the ſoul long dead in ſin, in order to recal it to the life of grace. I find there only this difference, that the almighty voice of God meets no reſiſtance from the body which he revives and recalls to life; on the contrary, the ſoul, dead and corrupted, as I may ſay, through the long duration of guilt; ſeems to retain a remainder of ſtrength and motion only to oppoſe that powerful voice which is heard even in the abyſs in which it is plunged, and which reſounds for the purpoſe of reſtoring it to light and life. Nevertheleſs, however difficult may be the converſion of a ſoul of this deſcription, and however rare ſuch examples may be, the ſpirit of God, in order to teach us never to deſpair of divine mercy when we ſincerely wiſh to quit the ways of iniquity, points out to us at preſent, in the reſurrection of Lazarus, the means of accompliſhing it.

The firſt is, confidence in Jeſus Chriſt: Lord, ſays Mary the ſiſter of Lazarus, if thou hadſt been here my brother had not died; but I know that, even now, whatſoever thou wilt aſk of God, God wilt give it thee. I am the reſurrection and the life, ſaid Jeſus unto her; believeſt thou this? Yes, Lord, ſaid ſhe, I believe that thou art the Chriſt the Son of God, which ſhould come into the world. It is through this that the miracle of raiſing up Lazarus begins, *viz.*

viz. the perfect confidence that Jesus Christ is able to deliver him from death and corruption.

For, my brethren, the delusion continually employed by the demon, in order to render our desires of conversion unavailing, and to counteract their progress, is that of despondency and mistrust; he warmly retraces to our imagination the horrors of an entire life of guilt: he says to us, in secret, that which the sisters of Lazarus say to Jesus Christ, though in a different sense; that we ought, at a much earlier period, to have checked our career; that it is now impossible, when so far advanced, to return; that the time for attempting a change is now past; and that the virulency and age of our wounds no longer admit a resource. Upon this they abandon themselves to languor and indolence; and, after having incensed the righteousness of God through our debaucheries, we insult his mercy through the excess of our mistrust.

I confess that a soul, long dead in sin, must suffer much in returning to God; that it is difficult, after so many years of dissipation, to form to one's self a new heart and new inclinations; and that it is even fit, that the obstacles, the sufferings, and the difficulties which always attend the conversion of souls of that description, should make great sinners feel how dreadful it is to have been almost a whole life-time removed from God.

But I say that, from the moment a truly contrite soul wishes to return to him, his wounds however virulent or old, ought no longer to alarm his confidence: I say that his wretchedness ought to increase his compunction but not his despondency: I say that the first step of his penitence

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ought to be that of adoring Jeſus Chriſt as the reſurrection and the life; a ſecret confidence that our wants are always leſs than his mercies; a firm perſuaſion that the blood of Jeſus Chriſt is more powerful in waſhing out our ſtains than our corruption can be in contracting them: I ſay that the fewer reſources of ſtrength a criminal ſoul may find in himſelf, the more ought he to expect from him who taketh delight in rearing up the work of grace upon the nothingneſs of nature; and that the more he is inwardly oppoſed to grace, the more does he, in one ſenſe, become an object worthy of divine power and mercy, for God wiſheth that all good ſhall evidently appear as coming from above, and that man ſhall attribute nothing to himſelf.

And in effect, my dear hearer, whatever may the horror of your paſt crimes be, the Lord will not long refuſe you grace, from the moment that he hath inſpired you with the deſire and the reſolution of aſking it. It is written in Judges, that the father of Sampſon, terrified by the apparition of the angel of the Lord, who, after announcing to him the birth of a ſon, commanded him to offer up a ſacrifice, and then, like a devouring fire, conſumed the victim and the pile, and vaniſhed from his ſight; that, terrified, I ſay, at that ſpectacle, he was convinced that both himſelf and his wife were to be ſtruck with death becauſe they had ſeen the Lord. But his wife, holy and enlightended, condemned his miſtruſt. If the Lord, ſaid ſhe to him, wiſhed to deſtroy us, he would not have made fire from heaven to deſcend on our ſacrifice: he would not have accepted it from our hands; he would not have diſcovered to us his ſecrets and his wonders, and what we had hitherto been ignorant of.

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And behold what I now anſwer to you. You believe your death and your deſtruction to be inevitable; the ſtate of your conſcience diſcourages you; in vain do ſparks of grace and of light fall upon your heart; in vain do they touch you, ſolicit you, and almoſt gain the point of conſuming the ſacrifice of your paſſions; you perſuade yourſelf that you are loſt beyond reſource. But, if the Lord wiſhed to abandon and to deſtroy you, he would not make fire from heaven to deſcend upon your heart; he would not light up within you holy deſires and ſentiments of penitence: if he wiſhed to let you die in the blindneſs of your paſſions, he would not manifeſt to you the truths of ſalvation; he would not open your eyes on thoſe miſeries to come, which you prepare for yourſelf. Beſides, how do you know if Jeſus Chriſt has not permitted your falling into ſuch a deplorable ſtate for the purpoſe of making a prodigy of your converſion an incitement to the converſion of your brethren? How do you know if his mercy has not rendered your paſſions ſo notorious, in order that thouſands of ſinners, witneſſes of your errors, deſpair not of converſion, and be inflamed at the ſight of your penitence? How do you know if your crimes, and even your ſcandals, have not entered into the deſigns of God's goodneſs with regard to your brethren; and if your ſituation, which ſeems hopeleſs like that of Lazarus, is not rather an occaſion of manifeſting God's glory than a preſage of death to you?

When grace recalls a common ſinner, the fruit of his converſion is limited to himſelf; but, when it ſingles out a grand ſinner, a Lazarus, long dead and corrupted; ah! the deſigns of its mercy are then much more extenſive: in one change it prepares a thouſand to come: it raiſes up a thouſand choſen out of one: and the crimes of a ſinner become

become the ſeed of a thouſand juſt. You give way to deſpondency in feeling the extremity of your wretchedneſs: but it is perhaps that very extremity which draws you nearer to the happy moment of your converſion, and which the goodneſs of God has reſerved for you, that you might be a public monument of the exceſs of his mercies towards the greateſt ſinners. Only believe, as Jeſus Chriſt ſaid to the ſiſters of Lazarus, and you ſhall ſee the glory of God; you ſhall ſee your relations, your friends, your inferiors, and even the accomplices of your debaucheries, become imitators of your penitence; you ſhall ſee the moſt hopeleſs ſouls ſighing after the happineſs of your new life; and the world itſelf forced to render glory to God, and, in recalling your paſt errors, to admire the prodigy of your preſent lot Take, even from your wretchedneſs itſelf, new motives of confidence; bleſs, in advance, the merciful wiſdom of that Being, who, even from your paſſions, ſhall know how to extract advantages to his glory; every thing co-operates towards the ſalvation of his choſen, and he permitteth great exceſſes only in order to operate great mercies. God ever wiſheth the ſalvation of his creature; and, from the moment that we form a wiſh of returning to him, our only dread ought to be, not that his juſtice reject us, but leſt our intention be not ſincere.

And the ſureſt proof of our ſincerity is the abſenting ourſelves from every occaſion which may place an obſtacle to our reſurrection and our deliverance; obſtacle, figured by the ſtone which ſhut up the mouth of Lazarus's tomb, and which Jeſus Chriſt orders to be removed before he begins to operate the miracle of his reſurrection; remove the ſtone. Second mean, marked in our goſpel.

In effect, every day ſhews ſinners, who, tired of diſorder, wiſh to return to God, but who cannot prevail upon themſelves to quit thoſe objects, thoſe places, thoſe ſituations, and thoſe rocks, which have been the cauſe of their removal from him: they vainly perſuade themſelves that they ſhall be able to extinguiſh their paſſions, to terminate a diſorderly life; in a word, to riſe from the dead, without removing the ſtone, they even make ſome efforts; they addreſs themſelves to men of God; they adopt meaſures for a change; but, it is of thoſe meaſures which, not removing the dangers, do not, in the ſmalleſt degree, forward their ſafety; and thus their whole life ſorrowfully paſſes away in deteſting their chains, and in the utter inability of breaking them aſunder.

Whence comes this, my brethren? It is that the paſſions begin to weaken only after the removal of ſuch objects as have lighted them up; it is abſurd to ſuppoſe that the heart can change while every thing around us continues, with regard to us, the ſame; you would become chaſte, yet you live in the midſt of the dangers, the connections, the familiarities, the pleaſures, which have a thouſand times corrupted your heart; you would wiſh to reflect ſeriouſly on your eternity, and to place ſome interval betwixt life and death, yet you are unwilling to place any betwixt death and thoſe debaucheries which prevent you from reflecting on your ſalvation; and, in the midſt of agitations, pleaſures, trifles, and worldly expectations, from which, on no account, you will abate, you expect that the inclination and reliſh for a Chriſtian life will come to you unſought-for: you would that your heart form new propenſities, ſurrounded by every thing which nouriſhes and fortifies the old; and that the lamp of faith and grace blaze up

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in the midſt of winds and tempeſts, it which, even in the ſanctuary, ſo often extinguiſhes through want of oil and nouriſhment, and, to lukewarm and retired ſouls, converts into a danger even the ſafety of their retreat.

You come, after that, to tell us that good-will is not yet come. How, indeed, ſhould it come in the midſt of every thing that repels it? But what is that good-will, ſhut up within you, which has never any conſequence, which never leads to any thing real, and never ſeriouſly adopts a ſingle meaſure towards a change? That is to ſay, that you would wiſh to change could it be done for nothing; you would wiſh to work out your ſalvation by the ſame conduct which occaſions your deſtruction; you would wiſh that the ſame manners which have ſeparated your heart from God ſhould approach you to him; and that what has hitherto been the cauſe of your ruin ſhould itſelf become the way and the mean of your ſalvation. Begin by removing the occaſions which ſo often have been, and ſtill continue to be, the rock of your innocence; remove the ſtone which ſhuts up the entry of grace to your ſoul; after that you ſhall be entitled to demand of God the completion of his works in you. Then, ſeparated from thoſe objects which nouriſhed iniquitous paſſions within you, you ſhall have it in your power to ſay to him, It is thy part now, O my God! to change my heart; to thee I have ſacrificed every attachment which might ſtill fetter it; I have removed all the rocks upon which my weakneſs might ſtill have ſplit: as much as in me lay, I have changed the outward man; thou alone, O Lord, canſt change the heart; it depends upon thee now to complete what yet remains to be done, to break the inviſible chains, to overcome all internal obſtacles, and totally to triumph over my corruption: I have removed the fatal ſtone which prevented me from

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hearing thy voice; let it now reſound, even through the abyſs in which I am ſtill buried; command me to depart from that fatal tomb, that place of infection and putrefcence, but command me with that almighty word which makes itſelf to be heard even by the dead, and is to them a word of reſurrection and life: give me in charge to thy diſciples, to be unlooſed from thoſe chains which hold captive all the powers of my ſoul; and let the miniſtry of thy church put the laſt ſeal to my reſurrection and my deliverance.

And behold, my brethren, the laſt mean held out in our goſpel. Immediately, on the removal of the ſtone, our Saviour cries, with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth! Lazarus comes forth, ſtill bound hand and foot, and Jeſus Chriſt remits him to his diſciples to be unlooſed.

Obſerve here that Jeſus Chriſt doth not order his diſciples to unlooſe Lazarus till after he had entirely quitted the tomb. We muſt manifeſt ourſelves to the church, ſays an holy father, before we can, through its miniſtry, receive the bleſſing of our deliverance. Lazarus come forth, that is to ſay, continues that father, how long wilt thou remain concealed and buried inwardly in thy conſcience? How long wilt thou conceal thine iniquity within thy breaſt?

You undoubtedly are not ignorant, my brethren, that remiſſion of our ſins is only granted through the miniſtry of the church, and that it is neceſſary to lay open and to preſent our bonds to the piety of the miniſters, who alone have authority to bind and to unbind on the earth; this is not upon what you require inſtruction. But, I ſay, that, in order that the converſion be ſolid and durable, we muſt, like Lazarus, ſhew ourſelves quite out of the tomb. An

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ordinary confeſſion is not the matter in queſtion: an hardened ſinner ought to go back even to his infancy; even to the birth of his paſſions; even to the youngeſt periods of his life, which have been the commencement of his crimes. Neither doubts nor obſcurities muſt longer be left in the conſcience, nor miſts over the youthful manners, under pretence that they have already been revealed: a general manifeſtation is required, and whatever may hitherto have been done muſt be reckoned as nothing; every duty of religion, performed during a diſorderly and worldly life, is even to be ranked among our crimes; the conſcience muſt be conſidered as a chaos, into which no light has, as yet, penetrated, and over which all our fictitious and paſt penitence has ſpread only additional darkneſs.

For, alas! my brethren, a contrite ſoul, after returning from the errors of the world and the paſſions, ought to preſume that, having to that period lived in criminal habits and propenſities, every time the ſacrament has been received in that ſtate was only a profanation and a crime.

In the *firſt* place, becauſe, having never felt real contrition for his errors, nor, conſequently, any ſincere deſire to purge himſelf of them, the remedies of the church, far from having purified, have only completed his foulneſs, and rendered his diſeaſe more incurable.

2dly, Becauſe he has never been known to himſelf; and conſequently, could never make himſelf known to the tribunal of his conſcience. For, alas! the world, in the midſt of which this ſoul has always lived, and in which he has ever thought and judged like it; the world, I ſay, finding reaſonable and wiſe only its own maxims and manners of thinking, does it ſufficiently know the holineſs of the

the gospel, the obligations of faith, and the extent of duties, to be qualified to enter into the detail of those transgressions which faith condemns?

3*dly*, and *lastly*, Because that, even admitting he should have known all his wretchedness, never having had any real sorrow for it, he has never been qualified to make it known; for nothing but heartfelt sorrow can explain itself as it ought, or truly represent those evils which it feels and abhors; it must be a feeling heart that can make itself to be understood on the wounds and the sufferings of a heart itself. A sinner, full of a profane passion, expresses it much more eloquently, and with more animation; nothing is left unsaid of the foolish and deplorable sufferings he endures; he enters into all the windings of his heart, his jealousies, his fears, and his hopes. As the mind of man, says the apostle, alone knows what passes in man, so likewise it is only the heart which can know what passes in the heart. Contrition gives eyes to see, and words to express every thing; it has a language which nothing can counterfeit: thus, in vain may a worldly soul, still chained by the heart to all his disorders, come to accuse himself, he cannot be understood; without any absolute intention of concealing his wounds, he never expose all their horror, because he neither feels nor is struck with them himself; his words always relish of the insensibility of his heart; and it is impossible that he should expose, in all their ugliness, deformities which he knows not, and which he still loves: he ought, therefore, to consider the whole period of his past life as a period of darkness and blindness, during which he has never viewed himself but with the eyes of flesh and blood; never judged but through the opinions of passion and self-love; never accused but in the language of error and impenitence; never exhibited himself but in

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a falſe and imperfect light. It is not enough to have removed the ſtone from the tomb: the criminal ſoul muſt come forth from it himſelf, that he may exhibit himſelf, as I may ſay, in open day: that he may manifeſt his whole life: and that, from his earlieſt years even to the bleſſed hour of his deliverance, nothing be concealed from the eyes of the miniſters ready to unbind him.

But this ſtep, you ſay, has difficulties which may be the occaſion of caſting trouble, embarraſſment, and diſcouragement, through the conſcience, and of ſuſpending the reſolution of a change of life. What! my brethren, you involve yourſelves in diſcuſſions ſo arduous and ſo endleſs, for the purpoſe of clearing up your temporal concerns; and, in order to eſtabliſh regularity and ſerenity in your conſcience, and to leave nothing doubtful in the affair of your eternity, you would cry out from the moment that a few cares and inveſtigations are required? How often do you proclaim, when a deciſive ſtep is in agitation which may determine the ruin or preſervation of your fortune, that nothing muſt be neglected, nothing muſt be left to chance: that one's own eyes muſt look into every thing, that every thing muſt be cleared up, every thing fathomed even to the bottom, that you may have nothing afterwards wherewith to reproach yourſelves; and this maxim, ſo reaſonable when connected with fleeting and frivolous intereſts, ſhould be leſs ſo when applied to the grand and only real intereſt, that of ſalvation?

Ah! my brethren, how poor are we in faith! And what have we, in this life, of more importance than the care of arranging that awful account which we have to render to the eternal Judge, and to the ſearcher of hearts and of thoughts? That is to ſay, the care of regulating our conſcience,

ſcience, of diſpelling its darkneſs, of purifying its ſtains, of clearing up its eternal intereſts, of confirming its hopes, of ſtrengthening ourſelves as much as the preſent condition permits, and making ourſelves acquainted, as far as in our power, with its ſituation and its diſpoſitions; and not to make our appearance before God like fools, unknown to ourſelves, uncertain of what we are, and of what we muſt for ever be. Such are the means of converſion marked out to us in the miracle of raiſing up Lazarus: let us conclude the hiſtory of our goſpel, and ſee what the motives are which determine Jeſus Chriſt to operate it.

REFLECTION III. To enter at once into our ſubject, without loſing ſight of the conſequence of the goſpel; the firſt motive which our Saviour ſeems to have, in the reſurrection of Lazarus, is that of drying up the tears, and rewarding the prayers and the piety of his ſiſters. Lord, ſaid they to him, he whom thou loveſt is ſick: and behold the firſt motive which often determines Jeſus Chriſt to operate the converſion of a great ſinner; the tears and the prayers of thoſe juſt ſouls who entreat it.

Yes, my brethren, whether it be that the Lord thereby wiſh to render virtue more reſpectable to ſinners, by according favours to them only through the mediation of juſt ſouls: whether it be that he intend more cloſely to knit together his members, and to perfect them in unity and in charity, by rendering the miniſtry of the one uſeful and requiſite to the other; it is certain, that it is through the prayers of the good, and in their interceſſion, that the ſource of the converſion of the greateſt ſinners ſprings up. As all is done for the juſt in the church, ſays the apoſtle, ſo it may be ſaid, that every thing is done through them; and, as ſinners are only endured in it to exerciſe their virtue

tue, or to animate their vigilance, they are alſo recalled from their errors only to conſole their faith, and to reward their groanings and prayers.

To love juſt ſouls is a beginning, then, of righteouſneſs to the greateſt ſinners; it is a preſage of virtue to reſpect it in thoſe who practiſe it; it is a proſpect of converſion to ſeek the ſociety of the good, to eſteem their acquaintance, and to intereſt them in our ſalvation; and, even admitting that our heart ſtill groan under iniquitous bonds, and that attachment to the world and to pleaſures ſtill ſeparate us from God, yet, from the moment that we begin to love his ſervants, we accompliſh, as it were, the firſt ſtep in his ſervice. It ſeems as if our heart already becomes tired of its paſſions, from the moment that we take pleaſure in the ſociety of thoſe who condemn them: and that a reliſh for virtue is on the eve of ſpringing up in us, from the moment that we take delight in thoſe whom virtue alone renders amiable.

Beſides, the juſt, inſtructed by ourſelves with regard to our weakneſſes, keep them continually preſent before the Lord; they lament, before him, over thoſe chains which ſtill bind us to the world and to its amuſements; they offer up to him ſome weak deſires of virtue which we have intruſted to their charge, in order to induce his goodneſs to grant more fervent and more efficacious ones; they carry, even to the foot of the throne, ſome feeble eſſays towards good which they have noted in us, in order to obtain for us the perfection and plenitude of his mercy. More affected with our evils than for their own wants, they piouſly forget themſelves, in order to ſnatch from deſtruction their brethren who are on the point of periſhing before their eyes: they alone love us for ourſelves, becauſe they

alone love in us but our ſalvation; the world may furniſh ſycophants, flatterers, ſocial companions in diſſipation, but virtue alone gives us friends.

And it is here that you who now liſten to me, who, perhaps, like Mary, were formerly ſlaves of the world and the paſſions, and who, latterly, touched with grace, like her, quit no more the feet of the Lord; it is here that you ought to remember that, in future, one of the moſt important duties of your new life is, that of continually demanding, like the ſiſter of Lazarus, from Jeſus Chriſt, the reſurrection of your brethren, the converſion of thoſe unfortunate ſouls who have been accomplices in your criminal pleaſures, and who ſtill, under the dominion of death and ſin, ſorrowly drag on their chains in the ways of the world and of error. You ought continually, in the bitterneſs of your heart, to be ſaying to Jeſus Chriſt, like the ſiſter of Lazarus: Lord, he whom thou loveſt is ſick; thoſe ſouls to whom I have been a ſtumbling-block, and who have leſs offended thee than I, are ſtill, however, in the ſhadow of death, and in the corruption of ſin: and I enjoy a deliverance of which I was more unworthy than they! Ah! Lord, the delight I feel in appertaining to thee ſhall never be perfect while I behold my brethren thus miſerably periſhing before mine eyes: I ſhall but imperfectly enjoy the fruit of thy mercies, while thou refuſeſt them to ſouls to whom I have myſelf been the fatal cauſe of their departure from righteouſneſs: and I ſhall never think that my crimes are fully forgiven, while I ſee them exiſting in thoſe ſinners who have been removed from thee only through my example and my paſſions.

Not, my brethren, that you ought to place your whole dependence on the prayers of the good, or to expect from them

them alone a change of heart and the gift of penitence. For this is a very general illuſion, and more eſpecially among thoſe who are high in the world: they ſuppoſe that, by reſpecting virtue, by ſhewing favour to the good, and by intereſting them to ſolicit our converſion from God, our chains ſhall drop off of themſelves without any effort on our part; they comfort themſelves upon that remainder of faith and religion which renders virtue in others ſtill dear and reſpectable to us; they give themſelves credit for not having, as yet, reached that point of free-thinking and impiety, ſo common in the world, which makes virtue the public butt of its cenſures and deriſion. But, alas! my brethren, it availed nothing to king Jehu that he had publicly rendered honour to the holy man Jehonadab; his vices ſtill ſubſiſted with all that reſpect he had for the man of God. It availed nothing to Herod that he had honoured the piety of John the Baptiſt, and that he had even loved the holy freedom of his diſcourſes: the deference which he had for the precurſor left him ſtill all the exceſs of his criminal paſſion. The honours which we pay to virtue attract aids to our weakneſs; but they do not juſtify our errors: the prayers of the good induce the Lord to pay more attention to our wants; but they do not render him more indulgent to our crimes: they obtain for us victory over the paſſions which we begin to deteſt; but not over thoſe which we ſtill love, and which we ſtill continue to cheriſh: in a word, they aſſiſt our good deſires; but they do not authoriſe our impenitence.

The miracle of raiſing up Lazarus teaches juſt ſouls, then, to ſolicit the converſion of their brethren; but the converſion and deliverance of their brethren likewiſe ſerve to animate their lukewarmneſs and ſlothfulneſs. Second motive which Jeſus Chriſt propoſes: he wiſhes, by the

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novelty of that prodigy, to arouſe the faith of his diſciples, ſtill dormant and languiſhing.

And ſuch is the fruit which Jeſus Chriſt continually expects from the miracles of his grace: he operates before your eyes, you who have long walked in his ways, ſudden and ſurpriſing converſions, in order, by the fervour and the zeal of theſe newly riſen from the dead, to confound your lukewarmneſs and indolence. Yes, my brethren, nothing is more calculated to cover us with confuſion, and to make us tremble over the infidelities which we ſtill mingle with a cold and languiſhing piety, than the ſight of a ſoul buried, but an inſtant ago, in the corruption of death and ſin, and whoſe errors had perhaps inflated the vanity of our zeal, and ſerved as a butt to the malignity of our cenſures; than the ſight, I ſay, of ſuch a ſoul, vivified, a moment after, by grace, freed from his chains, and boldly walking in the ways of God, more eager after mortification than formerly after pleaſure; more removed from the world and its amuſements than apparently he was once attached; ſcrupling to himſelf the moſt innocent recreations; allowing almoſt no bounds to the vivacity and tranſports of his penitence; and every day making rapid advances in piety: while we, after many years of piety, alas! ſtill languiſh in the beginning of that holy career; while we, after ſo many ſignal favours received, after ſo many truths known, after ſo many ſacraments and other duties of religion attended, alas! we ſtill hold to the world and to ourſelves by a thouſand ties; we are yet but in the firſt rudiments of faith and of a Chriſtian life, and ſtill more diſtant than at firſt, from that zeal and that fervour which conſtitute the whole value and the whole ſecurity of a faithful piety.

My

My brethren, the dreadful prophecy of Jeſus Chriſt is every day fulfilled before our eyes. Publicans and ſinners, perſons of a ſcandalous conduct according even to the world, and as diſtant from the kingdom of God as the eaſt is from the weſt, are converted, repent, ſurpriſe the world with the ſight of a retired and mortified life, and ſhall ſit down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob; and perhaps we who are looked upon as children of the kingdom; we, whoſe manners preſent nothing to the eyes of the world but what is orderly and laudable; we, who are held out as morals of propriety and piety; we, whom the world canoniſes, and which we glorified with the reputation and the appearances of piety, alas! we ſhall perhaps be rejected and confounded with unbelievers, for having always laboured at our ſalvation with negligence, and having preſerved a heart ſtill altogether worldly, in the midſt even of our pious works.

Thus, my brethren, you whom this diſcourſe regards, do not judge of yourſelves from the compariſon which you inwardly make with thoſe ſouls whom the world and the paſſions hurry away. We may be more righteous than the world, and yet not enough ſo for Jeſus Chriſt: for the world is ſo corrupted; the goſpel is ſo little known in it: faith is ſo weakened; the law and truth ſo little obſerved, that what is virtue, with regard to it, may ſtill be a great iniquity in the ſight of God.

Rather compare yourſelves with thoſe holy penitents who formerly edified the church by the prodigy of their auſterities, and whoſe life, even at this day, appears to us ſo incredible; with thoſe noble martyrs who gave up their body for the truth, and who, amidſt the moſt cruel torments, were tranſported with joy in contemplating the holy promiſes;

iſes; with thoſe primitive believers who ſuffered death every day for Jeſus Chriſt, and who, under perſecution, loſs of property, and of their children, thought themſelves ſtill poſſeſſed of all, as they had neither loſt faith nor the hope of a better life: behold the models by whom you ought to meaſure your piety, to find it ſtill deficient, and all worldly. Unleſs you reſemble them, in vain do you not reſemble the world, you ſhall periſh like it; it is not enough that you do not imitate the crimes of the worldly, you muſt alſo have the virtues of the juſt.

Laſtly, Not only the goodneſs of Jeſus Chriſt wiſhes, in this miracle, to furniſh to his diſciples and to the Jewiſh believers a freſh motive for believing in him, but in it his juſtice likewiſe ſupplies a freſh occaſion of obſtinacy and incredulity to the unbelieving Iſraelites; laſt circumſtance of our goſpel. They take meaſures to deſtroy him; they wiſh to put Lazarus himſelf to death, that ſo ſtriking a teſtimony of the power of Jeſus Chriſt may no longer continue among them. They had weeped his death; ſcarcely is he recalled to life when he appears worthy only of their fury and vengeance. And behold the ſole fruit which the generality of you commonly reap from the miracles of grace: that is to ſay, from the converſion and the ſpiritual reſurrection of great ſinners. Before that the mercy of Jeſus Chriſt had caſt looks of grace and ſalvation upon a criminal ſoul, and, while delivered up to the dominion of the paſſions, he was not only dead in ſin, but ſpread every where around the infection and the ſtench of his diſorders and ſcandals, you ſeemed touched for its errors and ſhame; you deplored the miſery of his lot; you mingled your tears and regrets with the tears and regrets of his friends and relatives; and the public irregularity of his conduct experienced from you every ſorrow and compaſſion

paſſion of humanity; but, ſcarcely hath the grace of Jeſus Chriſt recalled him to life, ſcarcely, come forth from the tomb and that abyſs of corruption in which he was buried, does he render glory to his deliverer by the holy ardours of a tender and ſincere piety, than you become the cenſurers even of his piety: you had appeared touched for the exceſs of his vices, and you publicly deride the exceſs of his pretended piety. You had blamed his warm purſuits after pleaſure, and you condemn the fervour of his love for God. Be conſiſtent, therefore, with yourſelves, and decide in favour either of the juſt or of the ſinner.

Yes, my brethren, if the happineſs of a ſoul, who, before your eyes, returns from his errors, excite not your envy; if the contrition of a ſinner, who was formerly the companion perhaps of your pleaſures, and exceſſes, leave you all your indifference with regard to ſalvation. Ah! inſult not at leaſt his good fortune; deſpiſe not in him the gift of God; take not, even from the miracles of grace ſo proper to open your eyes, a freſh motive of blindneſs and unbelief; and do not thus change the bleſſings of God to your brethren, into a dreadful judgment of juſtice againſt you.

In reading the hiſtory of our goſpel, you are ſometimes aſtoniſhed that the obſtinacy and blindneſs of the Jews ſhould be able to reſiſt the moſt ſtriking miracles of Jeſus Chriſt; you do not comprehend how the raiſing up of the dead, the curing of perſons born blind, and ſo many other wonders wrought before their eyes, did not force them to acknowledge the truth of his miniſtry, and the ſanctity of his doctrine: you ſay, that much leſs would convince you; that any one of all theſe miracles would ſuffice, and that you would immediately yield to the truth.

But

But, my brethren, you condemn yourſelves out of your own mouth; for, (without refuting here that abſurd manner of ſpeaking, by thoſe grand and ſublime proofs which religion furniſhes againſt impiety, and which we have elſewhere employed,) candidly, is it not a more arduous and a more aſtoniſhing miracle, that a ſoul, delivered up to ſin, and to the moſt ſhameful paſſions, born with every properſity to voluptuouſneſs, pride, revenge, and ambition, and more diſtant than any one, by the nature of his heart, from the kingdom of God, and from all the maxims of Chriſtian piety; that, all at once, that ſoul ſhould renounce all his gratifications, break aſunder all his warmeſt attachments, repreſs his livelieſt paſſions, change his moſt rooted inclinations, forget injuries, attention to the body and to fortune; no longer have a reliſh but for prayer, retirement, the practice of the moſt gloomy and diſguſting duties, and hold out to the eyes of the public, in a change, in a reſurrection ſo palpable, the ſpectacle of a life ſo different from the former, that the world, that free-thinking itſelf ſhall be forced to render glory to the truth of his change, and that they ſhall no longer know him to be the ſame; is it not, I ſay, a more arduous and more aſtoniſhing miracle?

Now, doth not the mercy of Jeſus Chriſt operate ſuch miracles almoſt every day before your eyes? Doth not his holy word, though in a weak and languiſhing mouth, ſtill raiſe up, every day, new Lazaruſes from the dead? You behold them; you know and you appear aſtoniſhed at them; yet, nevertheleſs, do they touch you? Do theſe wonders which, with ſo much majeſty, the finger of God maketh to ſhine forth, recal you to truth and to the light? Do theſe changes, a thouſand times more miraculous than the raiſing up of the dead, convince you? Do they bring you nearer

nearer to Jeſus Chriſt, or reſtore to you that faith which you have loſt?

Alas! your whole care, like the Jews, is to ſtand out againſt or to weaken their truth. You deny that grace hath any part in the glory of theſe wonders; you ſeek to trace their motives in cauſes altogether worldly; you conſider them as deluſions and impoſitions; you attribute to the artifices of man the moſt ſhining operations of the holy Spirit; you inſiſt that ſuch a new life is only a freſh ſnare to entrap the public credulity, and a new path more ſecurely to attain ſome worldly purpoſe. Thus, the works of the Almighty power of Jeſus Chriſt harden you; thus, even the wonders of his grace complete your blindneſs; thus you make every thing conducive towards your deſtruction: Jeſus Chriſt becomes to you a ſtumbling-block, when he ought to have been a ſource of life and ſalvation. The examples of ſinners ſtain and corrupt you; their penitence revolts and hardens you.

Great God! ſuffer then, in order that a life altogether criminal at laſt be terminated, that I now raiſe my voice to thee out of the depths in which I have, for ſo many years, languiſhed: the impure chains with which I am bound, attach me by ſo many folds, to the bottom of the gulf in which I drag on my gloomy days, that, in ſpite of all my good deſires, I ſtill remain fettered, and almoſt incapable of any effort towards diſengaging myſelf and returning to thee, O my God, whom I have forſaken. But, Lord, out of the depths even in which thou ſeeſt me, like another Lazarus, fettered and buried, I have, at leaſt, the voice of the heart free to ſend up, even to the foot of the throne, my ſorrows, my lamentations, and my tears.

The voice of a repentant ſinner is always agreeable, O Lord, to thine ear; it is that voice of Jacob which awakens all thy tenderneſs, even when it offers to thy ſight but hands of Eſau, and ſtill covered with blood and crimes.

Ah! thine holy ears, O Lord, have now ſufficiently been turned away from my licentious and blaſphemous words; let them now be attentive to the voice of my ſupplications; and let the ſingularity of the words which I now addreſs to thee, O my God! attract a more favourable attention to my prayer.

I come not here, great God! to excuſe my diſorders in thy ſight, by alledging to thee the occaſions which have ſeduced me, the examples which have led me aſtray, the misfortune of my engagements, and the nature of my heart and of my weakneſs: cover thine eyes, O Lord, upon the horrors of my paſt life; the only poſſibility of excuſing them is, not to behold or to know them: alas! if I am unable myſelf to ſupport even their view; if my crimes dread and fly from mine own eyes, and if my terrors and my weakneſs render it abſolutely neceſſary to turn my ſight from them, how, O Lord ſhould they be able to ſuſtain the ſanctity of thy looks, if thou ſearch into them with that eye of ſeverity which finds ſtains in the pureſt and moſt laudable life?

But thou, O Lord, are not a God like unto man, to whom it is always ſo difficult to pardon and to forget the injuries of an enemy; goodneſs and mercy dwell in thine eternal boſom; clemency is the firſt attribute of thy ſupreme Being; and thou haſt no enemies but thoſe who refuſe to place their truſt in the abundant riches of thy mercy.

Yes,

Yes, Lord! be the hour what it may when a criminal ſoul caſts himſelf upon thy mercy; whether in the morning of life or in the decline of age; whether after the errors of youthful manners or after an entire life of diſſipation and licentiouſneſs, thou wouldſt, O my God! that their hope in thee be not extinguiſhed; and thou aſſureſt us that the higheſt point of our crimes is but the loweſt degree of thy mercy.

But, likewiſe, great God! if thou liſten to my deſires; if, once more, thou reſtore to me that life and that light which I have loſt; if thou break aſunder my chains of death which ſtill fetter me; if thou ſtretch out thine hand to withdraw me from the gulph in which I am plunged, ah! never, O Lord, ſhall I ceaſe to proclaim thine eternal mercies: I will forget the whole world, that I may be occupied only with the wonders of thy grace towards my ſoul: I will every moment of my life render glory to the God who ſhall have delivered me: my mouth for ever ſhut againſt vain things, ſhall with difficulty be able to expreſs all the tranſports of my love and of my gratitude; and thy creature who ſtill groans under the dominion of the world and of ſin, then reſtored to his true Lord, ſhall, henceforth and for ever more, bleſs his deliverer.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

LUKE xxi. 27.

Then ſhall they ſee the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.

SUCH will be that laſt ſpectacle which ſhall terminate the eternal revolutions which the aſpect of this world is continually offering to our eyes, and which either amuſe us through their novelty, or ſeduce us by their charms. Such will be the coming of the Son of Man, the day of his revelation, the accompliſhment of his kingdom, and the complete redemption of his myſtical body. Such the day of the manifeſtation of conſciences, that day of miſery and deſpair to one portion of men, and of peace, conſolation, and ineffable delight to the other: the ſweet expectation of the juſt, the dread of the wicked; the day which is to determine the deſtiny of all men.

It was the image, ever preſent to their minds, of that terrible day which rendered the firſt believers patient under perſecution, delighted under ſufferance, and illuſtrious under injury and reproach. It is that which hath ſince ſupported the faith of martyrs, animated the conſtancy of virgins, and ſmoothed to the anchorite all the horrors of a deſert;

ert; it is that which ſtill, at this day, peoples thoſe religious ſolitudes erected, by the piety of our anceſtors, as aſylums againſt the contagion of the age.

Even you, my brethren, when the awful ſolemnity of that grand event hath ſometimes intruded on your thoughts, have been unable to check feelings of compunction and dread. But theſe have been only tranſitory fears; more ſmiling and more agreeable ideas have ſpeedily effaced them, and recalled to you your former calm. Alas! in the happy days of the church it would have been conſidered as renouncing faith not to have longed for the day of the Lord. The only conſolation of thoſe firſt diſciples of faith was in looking forward to it, and the apoſtles were obliged even to moderate, on that point, the holy eagerneſs of believers; and, at preſent, the church finds itſelf under the neceſſity of employing the whole terror of our miniſtry, in order to recal its remembrance to Chriſtians, and the whole fruit of our diſcourſes is confined to making it dreaded.

I mean not, however, to diſplay to you here the whole hiſtory of that awful event. I wiſh to confine myſelf to one of its circumſtances, which has always appeared to me as the moſt proper to make an impreſſion on the heart: it is the manifeſtation of conſciences.

Now, behold my whole deſign. On this earth the ſinner never knows himſelf ſuch as he is, and is only half-known to men; he lives, in general, unknown to himſelf, through his blindneſs, and to others, through his diſſimulation and cunning. In that grand day he will know himſelf, and will be known. The ſinner laid open to himſelf: the ſinner laid open to all creatures: behold the ſubject upon which I have

have reſolved to make ſome ſimple and, I truſt, edifying reflections.

PART I. "All things are reſerved for a future day, "ſays the ſage Eccleſiaſtes, and no man knoweth them "here below, for all things come alike to all: there is one "event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good "and to the evil, to the clean, and to the unclean; to him "that ſacrificeth, and to him that ſacrificeth not; as is the "good, ſo is the ſinner."

What idea, indeed, ſhould we have of Providence in the government of the univerſe, were we to judge of its wiſdom and juſtice only from the diverſe lots which it provides on the earth for men? What! The good and the evil ſhould be diſpenſed on the earth, without choice, reſpect, or diſcrimination? The juſt man ſhould almoſt always groan under affliction and want, whilſt the wicked ſhould live ſurrounded with glory, pleaſures, and affluence, and, after fortunes ſo different, and manners ſo diſſimilar, both ſhould alike ſink into an eternal oblivion; and that juſt and avenging God, whom they ſhould afterwards meet, would not deign either to weigh their deeds or to diſtinguiſh their merits? Thou, O Lord, art juſt, and wilt render to each according to his works.

This grand point of Chriſtian faith, ſo conſiſtent even with natural equity, ſuppoſed: I ſay, that, in that terrible day, when, in the face of the univerſe, the ſinner ſhall appear before that awful tribunal accompanied by his works, the manifeſtation of conſciences will be the moſt horrible puniſhment of the unfaithful ſoul. A rigorous examination ſhall, in the firſt place, make him known to himſelf; and behold all the circumſtances of that awful diſcuſſion.

I ought,

I ought, in the firſt place, to make you obſerve all the titles with which he will be inveſted who ſhall examine you, and which announce all the rigour with which he ſhall weigh in the balance your deeds and thoughts. It will be a rigid legiſlator, jealous of the ſanctity of his law, and who will judge you only by it; all the ſoftenings, all the vain interpretations, which cuſtom or a falſe knowledge had invented, ſhall vaniſh; the luſtre of the law will diſſipate them; the reſources with which they had flattered the ſinner, will ſink into nothing; and the incenſed legiſlator will examine almoſt more rigorouſly the falſe interpretations which had changed its purity, than the manifeſt tranſgreſſions which had violated it. It will be a judge charged with the intereſts of his Father's glory againſt the ſinner, eſtabliſhed to decide betwixt God and man; and that day will be the day of his zeal for the honour of the divinity, againſt thoſe who ſhall not have rendered to him that honour which is his due: a Saviour, who will ſhew you his wounds to reproach your ingratitude; all that he hath done for you will riſe up againſt you; his blood, the price of your ſalvation, will loudly demand your deſtruction; and his deſpiſed kindneſſes will be numbered among your heavieſt crimes: the ſearcher of hearts, to whoſe eyes the moſt hidden councils and the moſt ſecret thoughts will be laid open: laſtly, a God of terrible majeſty, before whom the heavens ſhall diſſolve, the elements ſhall be confounded, and all nature overturned; and whoſe ſcrutiny, with all the terror of his preſence, the ſinner ſhall ſingly be forced to ſupport.

Now, behold the circumſtances of that awful examination. *1ſtly*, It will be the ſame for all men: and, as St. Matthew ſays, before him ſhall be gathered all nations. The difference of ages, countries, conditions, birth, and temperament,

temperament, ſhall no longer be there attended to; and as the goſpel, on which you will be judged, is the law of all times and conditions, and holds out the ſame rules to the prince and to the ſubject, to the great and to the lowly, to the anchorite and to the man immerſed in the affairs of the world; to the believer who lived in the fervour of the primitive times, and to him who hath the misfortune to live in the relaxation of the preſent age; no diſtinction will be made in the manner of proceeding on the examination of the guilty. Vain excuſes on rank and birth, on the dangers of his ſtation, on the manners of his age, on the weakneſs of temparament, will then be no longer liſtened to from you; and, with reſpect to modeſty, chaſtity, ambition, forgiveneſs of injuries, renouncement of one's ſelf, mortification of the ſenſes, the juſt Judge will demand an exact account, equally from the Greek as from the Barbarian; from the poor as from the powerful: from the man of the world as from the ſolitary; from the prince as from the humbleſt ſubject; *laſtly*, from the Chriſtians of theſe latter times as from the firſt diſciples of the goſpel.

Vain judgments of the earth, how ſhall you then be confounded! And how little ſhall we then eſtimate nobility of blood, the glory of anceſtry, the blaze of reputation, the diſtinction of talents, and all thoſe pompous titles with which men endeavour on this earth to puff out their meanneſs, and to found ſo many vain diſtinctions and privileges, when we ſhall ſee amidſt that crowd of guilty, the ſovereign confounded with the ſlave; the great with the meaneſt of the people; the learned promiſcuouſly blended with the ignorant and mean; the gods of war, theſe invincible and far-famed characters who had filled the univerſe with their name, at the ſide of the huſbandman and labourer; thou alone, O my God! haſt glory, power, and immortality; and,

and, all the titles of vanity being deſtroyed and annihilated with the world which had invented them, each will appear before thee accompanied ſolely by his works!

2dly, That examination will be univerſal, that is to ſay, that it will comprehend all the different ages and circumſtances of your life: the weakneſſes of childhood, which have eſcaped your remembrance; the tranſports of youth, of which almoſt every moment has been a crime; the ambition and the anxieties of a riper age; the obſtinacy and the chagrins of an old age, ſtill perhaps voluptuous. What aſtoniſhment, when repaſſing over the diverſe parts which you have acted on the earth, you ſhall find yourſelves every where profane, diſſolute, voluptuous, without virtue, without penitence, without good works; having paſſed through a diverſity of ſituations merely in order to amaſs a more abundant treaſure of wrath; and having lived in theſe diverſe ſtates as if, to a certainty, all were to die with you!

The variety of events, which ſucceed each other here below, and divide our life, fix our attention only on the preſent, and do not permit us to recollect it in the whole, or fully to ſee what we really are. We never regard ourſelves but in that point of view in which our preſent ſituation holds us out; the laſt ſituation is always the one which leads us to judge of ourſelves; a ſentiment of ſalvation, with which God ſometimes indulges us, calms us on an inſenſibility of many years; a day, paſſed in exerciſes of piety, makes us forget a life of crimes; the declaration of our faults, at the tribunal of penitence, effaces them from our remembrance, and they become to us as though they had never been: in a word, of all the different ſtates of our conſcience we never ſee but the preſent. But, in

the preſence of the terrible Judge, the whole will be viſible at once; the hiſtory will be entirely laid open. From the very firſt feeling formed by your heart, even to its laſt ſigh, all ſhall be collected before your eyes; all the iniquities, diſperſed through the different ſtages of your life, will then confront you; not an action, not a deſire, not a word, not a thought, will there be omitted; for, if our hairs be numbered, judge of our deeds. We ſhall ſee ſpring up the whole courſe of our years, which, though as if annihilated to us, yet lived in the eyes of God; and there we ſhall find, not thoſe periſhable hiſtories in which our vain actions were to be tranſmitted to poſterity; not thoſe flattering recitals of our military exploits, of thoſe brilliant events which have filled ſo many volumes, and exhauſted ſo much praiſe; not thoſe public records in which are ſet down the nobility of our birth, the antiquity of our origin, the fame of our anceſtors, the dignities which have rendered them illuſtrious, the luſtre which we have added to their name, and all the hiſtory, as I may ſay, of human illuſion and weakneſs; that immortality ſo vaunted, which it promiſed to us, ſhall be buried in the ruins and in the wrecks of the univerſe; but there we ſhall ſeethe moſt ſhocking and exact hiſtory of our heart, of our mind, of our imagination; that is to ſay, that internal and inviſible part of our life, equally unknown to ourſelves as to the reſt of men.

Yes, my brethren: beſides the exterior hiſtory of our manners, which will be all recalled, what will moſt aſtoniſh us is, the ſecret hiſtory of our heart, which will then be wholly laid open to our eyes; of that heart which we have never ſounded, never known; of that heart which continually eluded our ſearch, and, under ſpecious names, diſguiſed from us the ſhame of its paſſions; of that heart whoſe elevation, probity, magnanimity, diſintereſtedneſs, and

and natural goodneſs we have ſo much vaunted; which the public error and adulation had beheld as ſuch, and which had occaſioned our being exalted above other men. So many ſhameful deſires, which were ſcarcely formed before we endeavoured to conceal them from ourſelves; ſo many abſurd projects of fortune and elevation, ſweet deluſions, up to which our ſeduced heart continually gave itſelf; ſo many ſecret and mean jealouſies which were the inviſible principle of all our conduct, yet, nevertheleſs, which we diſſemble through pride; ſo many criminal diſpoſitions which had, a thouſand times, induced us ardently to wiſh, that either the pleaſures of the ſenſes were eternal, or that, at leaſt, they ſhould remain unpuniſhed; ſo many hatreds and animoſities which, unknown to ourſelves, had corrupted our heart; ſo many defiled and vicious intentions, with regard to which we were ſo ingenious in flattering ourſelves; ſo many projects of iniquity to which opportunity had alone been wanting, and which we reckoned as nothing, becauſe they had never departed from the heart: in a word, that viciſſitude of paſſions which, in ſucceſſion, had poſſeſſion of our heart: behold what ſhall all be diſplayed before our eyes. We ſhall ſee, ſays a holy father, come out, as from an ambuſcade, numberleſs crimes of which we could never believe ourſelves capable. We ſhall be ſhewn to ourſelves; we ſhall be made to enter into our own heart, where we had never reſided: a ſudden light ſhall clear upthat abyſs: that myſtery of iniquity ſhall be revealed: and we ſhall ſee that which of all we knew leaſt, that was ourſelves.

To the examination of the evils we have committed will ſucceed that of the good which we have failed to do. The endleſs omiſſions of which our life has been full, and for which we had never felt even remorſe, will be recalled; ſo many

many circumſtances where our character engaged us to render glory to the truth, and where we have betrayed it through vile motives of intereſt, or mean compliances; ſo many opportunities of doing good, provided for us by the goodneſs of God, and which we have almoſt always neglected; ſo much culpable and voluntary ignorance, in conſequence of having always dreaded the light, and even fled from thoſe who could have inſtructed us; ſo many events ſo calculated to open our eyes, and which have ſerved only to increaſe our blindneſs; ſo much good which, through our talents or our example, we might have done, and which we have prevented by our vices; ſo many ſouls whoſe innocence might have been preſerved by our bounty, and whom we have left to periſh by refuſing to abate from our profuſions; ſo many crimes which might have been prevented in our inferiors or equals by prudent remonſtrances and uſeful advice, and which indolence, meanneſs, and perhaps more culpable views, have made us ſuppreſs; ſo many days and moments which might have been placed to advantage for Heaven, and which we have ſpent in inutility and an unworthy effeminacy. And what in this is more dreadful, is that, in our own eyes, that was the moſt innocent part of our life, offering nothing to our remembrance, as we think, but a great void.

What endleſs regret, then, to the unfaithful ſoul to ſee ſuch a liſt of days ſacrificed to inutility, to that world which is no more: while a ſingle moment, conſecrated to a God faithful to his promiſes, might have merited the felicity of the holy! To ſee ſo many meanneſſes, ſo many ſubjections for the ſake of riches, and a miſerable fortune which could laſt only for a moment; while a ſingle violence, ſuffered for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, would have ſecured to him an immortal crown! What regret, when he

he now finds that not half the cares and anxieties were required for his ſalvation which he has undergone to accompliſh his deſtruction; and that a ſingle day of that long life, wholly devoted to the world, had ſufficed for eternity!

To that examination will ſucceed, in the fourth place, that of mercies which you have abuſed; ſo many holy inſpirations either rejected or only half proſecuted; ſo many watchful attentions of Providence to your ſoul rendered unavailing; ſo many truths, declared through our miniſtry, which, in many believers, have operated penitence and ſalvation, but have always been ſterile in your heart; ſo many afflictions and diſappointments, which the Lord had provided for you, in order to recal you to him, and of which you have always made ſo unworthy an uſe; even ſo many natural gifts which once were bloſſoms of virtue, and which you have turned into agents of vice: ah! if the unprofitable ſervant be caſt into utter darkneſs for having only hidden his talent, with what indulgence can you flatter yourſelf, you who have received ſo many, and who have always employed them againſt the glory of that Maſter who had entruſted them to you?

Here, indeed, it is that the reckoning will be terrible. Jeſus Chriſt will demand from you the price of his blood. You ſometimes complain that God doth not enough for you; that he hath brought you into the world weak, and of a temperament of which you are not the maſter; and that he beſtoweth not the neceſſary grace to enable you to reſiſt the many opportunities which drag you away. Ah! you will then ſee that your whole life has been a continued abuſe of his mercies; you will ſee that, among ſo many infidel nations which know him not, you have been priviledged,

vileged, enlightened, called to faith, nouriſhed in the doctrine of truth and the virtue of the ſacrament, inceſſantly ſupported by his inſpirations and his grace; you will be ſhocked to ſee all that God hath done for you, and the little that you have done for him; and your complaints will quickly be changed into an utter confuſion, deſtitute of every reſource but in the horrors of your own deſpair.

Hitherto the juſt Judge hath examined you only on thoſe crimes which are eſpecially your own; but what will it be when he ſhall enter into a reckoning with you on the ſins of others, of which you have been either the occaſion or cauſe, and which will, conſequently, be charged to your account? What a new ſink! All the ſouls to whom you have been a ſubject of ſcandal and ruin will be preſented to you; all the ſouls whom your diſcourſes, your counſels, your example, your ſolicitations, your immodeſties, have precipitated, with yourſelf, into eternal deſtruction; all the ſouls whoſe weakneſs you have either ſeduced, or whoſe innocence you have corrupted, whoſe faith you have perverted, whoſe virtue you have ſhaken, whoſe free-thinking you have authoriſed, or whoſe impiety you have ſtrengthened by your perſuaſions, or by the example of your life. Jeſus Chriſt, to whom they belonged, and who had purchaſed them with his blood, will demand them at your hands, as a dear heritage, as a precious conqueſt, which you have unjuſtly raviſhed from him, and, if the Lord marked Cain with the ſign of reprobation in demanding account from him of the blood of his brother, judge with what ſign you ſhall be marked when you ſhall be brought to a reckoning for his ſoul.

But

But this is not all. Were you a public character, and high in authority, what abuſes authoriſed! What iniquities glanced over! What duties ſacrificed, either to your own intereſts, or to the paſſions and intereſts of others! What reſpect of perſons, in oppoſition to equity and conſcience! What iniquitous undertakings counſelled! What wars, perhaps, what confuſions, what public evils, of which you have either been the author or the infamous agent! You will ſee that your ambition or your counſels have been as the fatal ſource of an infinity of miſeries, of the calamities of your age, of thoſe evils which are perpetuated, and paſs from the father to ſon; and you will be ſurpriſed to find that your iniquities have ſurvived yourſelf, and that, even long after death, you were ſtill culpable, before God, of an infinity of crimes and diſorders which took place on the earth. And now it is, my brethren that the danger of public ſtations ſhall be known, the precipices which ſurround the throne itſelf, the rocks of authority, and with what reaſon the goſpel denominated happy thoſe who live in the obſcurity of a private ſtation; with what it was that religion wiſhed to inſpire us with ſo much horror at ambition, ſo much indifference towards the grandeurs of the earth, ſo much contempt for all that is exalted only in the eyes of men, and ſo frequently recommended to us to love only what we ought for ever to love.

But, exempted perhaps from all theſe vices which we have juſt been mentioning, and attached, for a long time paſt, to the duties of a Chriſtian life, you preſume, that this terrible examination will either not regard you, or, at any rate, that you will appear there with more confidence than the criminal ſoul. Undoubtedly, my dear hearer, that will be the day of triumph and glory for the juſt; the day which will juſtify theſe pretended exceſſes of retreat, mortification,

mortification, modeſty, and delicacy of conſcience, which had furniſhed to the world ſo many ſubjects of cenſure and profane deriſion: the juſt ſhall, no doubt appear before that awful tribunal with more confidence than the ſinner; but he will alſo appear there, and even his righteouſneſs ſhall be judged: your virtues, your holy works, will be ſubmitted to that rigorous examination. The world, which often refuſes the praiſes due to the trueſt virtue, too often likewiſe grants them to the ſole appearances of virtue: there are even ſo many juſt who deceive themſelves, and who are indebted, for that name and that reputation, merely to the public error. Thus, it is not only Tyre and Sidon that I ſhall viſit in the day of my wrath, ſayeth the Lord; that is to ſay, thoſe ſinners whom their crimes ſeemed to confound with the unbelievers and the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon: I ſhall carry the light of my judgments even to Jeruſalem; that is to ſay, I will examine, I will ſearch into, I will fathom the motives of thoſe holy works which ſeem to equal you with the moſt faithful of the holy Jeruſalem.

I will trace, even to the ſource, the motive of that converſion which made ſo much noiſe in the world; and it ſhall be ſeen whether I find not its origin in ſome ſecret diſguſt, in the declenſion of youth and fortune, in private views of favour and preferment, rather than in the deteſtation of ſin and love of righteouſneſs.

I will balance thoſe liberalities poured out on the boſom of the poor, thoſe compaſſionate viſits, that zeal for pious undertakings, that protection granted to my ſervants with complaiſance, a deſire of eſteem, oſtentation, and worldly views which have infected them; and, in my ſight, they ſhall perhaps appear to be rather the fruits of pride, than the conſequences of grace and the work of my Spirit.

I will

I will recal that train of prayer and other holy practices of which you had made a kind of habit, which no longer rouſed within you any ſeeling of faith and compunction; and you ſhall know whether lukewarmneſs, negligence, the little fruit which attended them, and the little diſpoſition within you previous to them, have not before me, conſtituted ſo many infidelities for which you ſhall be judged without mercy.

I will ſearch into that removal from the world and from pleaſures, that ſingularity of conduct, that affectation of modeſty and regularity; and, perhaps, I ſhall find them more the conſequence of humour, temperament, and indolence, than of faith; and that in a life more regular and more retired, in the opinion of men, you ſhall ſtill have preſerved all your ſelf-love, your attachment to the fleſh, all the nicities of ſenſuality; and, in a word, all the ſins of the moſt worldly ſouls.

I will ſearch, even to the bottom, that pretended zeal for my glory which made you ſo deeply lament over the ſcandals of which you were a ſpectator, which led you to condemn them with ſuch confidence and pride, and to blaze out, with ſuch warmth, againſt the irregularities and weakneſſes of your brethren; and, perhaps, ſhall that zeal be no longer in my ſight but a natural ſeverity of temper, a malignity of diſpoſition, an inclination towards cenſure and upbraiding, and indiſcreet warmth, a vain oſtentatious zeal; far from finding you full of zeal for my glory, and for the ſalvation of your brethren, you ſhall no longer appear before me, but unjuſt, obſtinate, malicious, and raſh-

I will demand an account from you of thoſe ſplendid talents which, it would appear, you employed only for my

glory and for the inſtruction of believers, and which had drawn upon you the bleſſings of the juſt, and the acclamations even of the worldly; and, perhaps, that continual attention to, and gratification of your own pride, the deſire of ſurpaſſing others, and your ſenſibility of human applauſe, will prove the prominent features of your works to be only the works of man and the fruits of pride, and that I ſhall curſe thoſe labours which had ſprung from ſo impure a ſource.

Great God! What works, upon which I had ſo firmly depended, ſhall then be found dead in thine eyes! How terrible ſhall be that diſcrimination! And, of all the actions which we have performed even for heaven, how few wilt thou acknowledge as thine, and which thou wilt deem worthy of reward!

Do not from thence conclude, my brethren, that it is then needleſs to labour for ſalvation, ſeeing the juſt Judge ſhall ſeek only the condemnation of men: only their condemnation. My brethren? He is come ſolely to ſave them, and his mercies will far ſurpaſs even his juſtice. But behold the concluſion which you ought rather to draw. Thoſe righteous ſouls whom you ſo frequently accuſe of exceſs, of ſcrupuloſity in the practice of the duties of a Chriſtian life, as though they carried things too far; theſe ſouls, expoſed to the light of God, ſhall appear lukewarm, ſenſual, imperfect, and perhaps criminal: and you, who live in the dangers and pleaſures of the world; you, who devote to religion and your ſalvation only the moſt idle moments of your life; you, who ſcarcely mingle a ſingle work of piety with an entire year of diſſipation and inutility, in what ſituation ſhall you then be, my dear hearer? If thoſe, who ſhall have only laudable works to preſent, ſhall yet be in danger of rejection, what ſhall be your deſti-

ny?

ny? You, who have only a life entirely worldly to offer? If the tree full of bloſſoms be treated with ſuch rigour, what ſhall become of the withered and barren tree? And, if the juſt be even with difficulty ſaved; I ſpeak not of the ſinner, for he is already judged; but the worldly ſoul, who lives without either vice or virtue, how ſhall he dare to appear?

You after ſay, my dear hearer, that your conſcience does not reproach you with great crimes: that, if not good, neither are you bad, and that your only ſin is indolence and ſloth. Ah! you ſhall then know yourſelf before the tribunal of Jeſus Chriſt. You ſhall ſee whether the teſtimony of your conſcience, which reproached you not with crimes, and left you ſcarcely any thing culpable to confeſs, were not a terrible blindneſs, up to which the juſtice of God had always delivered you. From the dread in which you ſhall ſee the juſt, you ſhall find what ought to be your own fears: and whether the confidence in which you have always lived, ſprung from the peace of a good conſcience, or from the falſe ſecurity of a worldly one.

O my God! cries St. Auguſtin, could I but ſee, at this moment, the ſtate of my ſoul as thou ſhalt then lay it open to me! Could I deſpoil myſelf of thoſe prejudices which blind me; miſtruſt thoſe examples which confirm me; thoſe cuſtoms which quiet me; thoſe talents which dazzle me; thoſe praiſes which ſeduce me; that rank and thoſe titles which deceive me; and thoſe complaiſances of a ſacred guide, which form all my ſecurity; could I but deſpoil myſelf of that ſelf-love which is the ſource of all my errors, and behold myſelf alone at thy feet, in thy light: O my God! what horror would I not feel for myſelf?

ſelf? And what meaſures would I not take, in humbling myſelf before thee, to prevent the public ſhame of that awful day, when the councils of hearts, and the ſecrecy of thoughts, ſhall be manifeſted? For, my brethren, not only ſhall the ſinner be ſhewn to himſelf, but he ſhall likewiſe be ſhewn to all creatures. . . . . .

PART II. That mixture of good and wicked, inevitable on this earth, gives birth to two diſorders. In the firſt place, through favour of that mixture, concealed vice eſcapes that public ignominy which is its due; virtue, not known, receives not the applauſe it merits. In the ſecond place, the ſinner, high in honours, frequently fills the moſt diſtinguiſhed offices, while the good and pious man lives in humiliation, and crawls like a ſlave at his feet. Now on that terrible day, a double manifeſtation ſhall be made, which will repair that two-fold diſorder. In the firſt place, the ſinful will be marked out from the juſt by the public expoſition of their conſcience. In the ſecond place, they will be diſcerned by ſeparation from them, and the difference of their ſtations before the throne of glory.

In order fully to comprehend all the ſhame and confuſion with which the criminal ſoul ſhall then be covered, when ſhewn to all creatures, and all his vices, the moſt ſecret, expoſed to the light, it requires only to pay attention: *1ſtly*, To the number and character of the ſpectators who ſhall witneſs his ſhame; *2dly*, To the care he had taken to conceal his weakneſſes and debaucheries from the eyes of men, while on the earth: *3dly*, and *laſtly*, To his perſonal qualities, which will render his confuſion ſtill more deep and overwhelming.

Here

Here figure to yourſelves, then, my brethren, the criminal ſoul before the tribunal of Jeſus Chriſt, ſurrounded by angels and men; the juſt, the ſinful, his relations, his ſubjects, his maſters, his friends, his enemies, all their eyes fixed on him; preſent at the terrible ſcrutiny which the juſt Judge will make into his actions, his deſires, and his thoughts; forced, in ſpite of themſelves, to aſſiſt at his judgment, and to witneſs the juſtice of the ſentence which the Son of Man ſhall pronounce againſt him. All the reſources which, on this earth, might ſoften the moſt humiliating confuſion, ſhall fail, on that day, to the unfaithful ſoul.

Firſt reſource. On this earth, when guilty of a fault which has ſunk us into contempt, the whole has turned on a certain number of witneſſes confined to our nation, or to the place of our birth; we may have removed ourſelves from them, in the courſe of time, to avoid continually reading, in their eyes, the remembrance and reproach of our paſt ſhame; we may have changed our place of dwelling to go elſewhere among ſtrangers, to recover a reputation which we had already loſt. But, on that grand day, all men aſſembled ſhall be acquainted with the ſecret hiſtory of your manners and of your conſcience: you ſhall no longer have it in your power to go, to hide yourſelf far from the looks of the ſpectators, to ſeek new countries, and, like Cain, to fly into the deſert. Each ſhall be fixed immoveable in the place marked out for him, bearing on his forehead the ſentence of his condemnation and the hiſtory of his whole life, obliged to ſuſtain the eyes of the univerſe, and the whole ſhame of his weakneſſes. There ſhall no longer, then, be any hidden ſpot wherein to conceal himſelf from the public regard; the light of God, the ſole glory of the Son of Man, will fill the heavens and the earth;

earth; and, in all that immenſity of ſpace around you; you will, in every part, diſcover from afar only watchful eyes fixed on you.

Second reſource. On the earth, when our ſhame is even public, and, when degraded in the minds of men, in conſequence of ſome ſtriking fault, yet there are always ſome friends grounded in our favour, whoſe eſteem and ſociety recompenſe us, in ſome meaſure, for the public contempt, and whoſe kindneſs aſſiſts us in ſuſtaining the inveteracy of the general cenſure. But, on this occaſion, the preſence of our friends will be the object by far the moſt inſupportable to our ſhame. If ſinners, like ourſelves, they will caſt up to us our common pleaſures and our example, which, perhaps, have been the firſt rock upon which their innocence ſplit: if juſt, as they had believed us to be children of light, ah! they will reproach to us their good opinion abuſed, and their friendſhip ſeduced. You loved the juſt, ſhall they ſay to us, and you hated righteouſneſs; you protected virtue, yet, in your heart, you placed vice on the throne: in us you ſought that probity, that fidelity, and that ſecurity which you found not in your worldly friends, but you ſought not the Lord who formed all theſe virtues in our heart: ah! did not the author of all our gifts deſerve to be more loved, more ſought after than we!

And behold the third reſource, which ſhall fail, to the confuſion of the criminal ſoul. For, ſhould no friends be found on this earth to intereſt themſelves in our misfortunes, there are always, at leaſt, indifferent perſons whom our faults do not wound or excite againſt us. But, on that terrible day, we ſhall have no indifferent ſpectators. The juſt, ſo feeling on this earth to the calamities of their brethren, ſo ingenious in excuſing their faults, and ſo ready in

in covering them with the veil of charity, in order, at leaſt, to ſoften, if they cannot find an apparant excuſe for them in the eyes of men; the juſt, then, deſpoiled, like the Son of Man, of that indulgence and pity which they had exerciſed towards their brethren on the earth, ſhall hiſs at the ſinner, ſays the prophet, ſhall inſult him, and ſhall demand his puniſhment from the Lord to avenge his glory; they ſhall enter into the zeal and the intereſts of his juſtice; and, becoming judges themſelves, they ſhall mock him, ſays the prophet, and ſay, "Lo, this is the man that made not God "his ſtrength; but truſted in the abundance of his riches, "and ſtrengthened himſelf in his wickedneſs. Behold, "now that fooliſh man, who believed himſelf the only ſage "on the earth, and who conſidered the life of the juſt as a "folly; who made to himſelf, in the favour of the great, "in the vanity of titles and dignities, in the extent of his "lands and poſſeſſions, in the good opinion and applauſes "of men, ſupports of dirt, which were to periſh with him. "Where, now, are your gods, your rock in whom you "truſted? Let them riſe up and help you, and be your pro-"tection."

Nor ſhall ſinners be more indulgent to his miſery; they will feel for him all that horror which they ſhall be forced to feel for themſelves; the fellowſhip of misfortune, which ought to unite, will be only an eternal hatred which ſhall divide them; only a cruel inveteracy, which ſhall fill their hearts with nothing but ſentiments of cruelty and fury againſt their brethren; and they will hate, in others, the ſame crimes from which all their miſeries ſpring. In a word, the men moſt diſtant from us, the moſt ſavage nations, to whom the name of Jeſus Chriſt hath never been announced, come then, but too late, to the knowledge of truth, ſhall riſe up againſt you, and reproach to you, that, if the

the miracles which God had, in vain, operated among you had been wrought before their eyes; that if they, like you, had been enlightened by the goſpel, and ſuſtained by the ſuccours of faith, they would have done penance in ſackcloth and aſhes, and put to advantage, for their ſalvation, thoſe favours which you have abuſed for your deſtruction.

Such ſhall be the confuſion of the reprobate ſoul. Accurſed before God, he will find himſelf, at the ſame time, the outcaſt of heaven and of earth, the ſhame and curſe of all creatures: even the inanimate, which he had forced to be ſubſervient to his paſſions, and which groaned, ſays St. Paul, in the expectation of deliverance from that ſhameful ſervitude, ſhall, in their way riſe up again him. The ſun, of which he had abuſed the light, ſhall be darkened, as if it were not to ſhine on his crimes: the ſtars ſhall diſappear, as if to tell him that they have too long witneſſed his iniquitous paſſions: the earth ſhall crumble from under his feet, as if to eject, from its boſom, a monſter which it could no longer bear: and the whole univerſe ſays Solomon, ſhall arm againſt him to avenge the glory of the Lord whom he has inſulted. Alas! we ſo dearly love to be lamented in our misfortunes: indifference alone irritates and wounds us: here, not only ſhall all hearts be ſhut to our misfortunes, but all beholders ſhall inſult our ſhame, and the only portion left to the ſinner ſhall be his confuſion, his deſpair, and his crimes. Firſt circumſtance of the confuſion of the criminal ſoul: *viz*, the multitude of witneſſes.

I take the ſecond from the care and anxiety they had taken, whilſt living on the earth, to diſguiſe and conceal themſelves from the eyes of men. For, my brethren, the world is a grand theatre on which almoſt every one acts a borrowed character. As we are full of paſſions, and as all

paſſions

paſſions have always in them ſomething mean and deſpicable, your whole attention is employed in concealing their meanneſs, and in endeavouring to give ourſelves out for what we are not: iniquity is always treacherous and deceitful. Thus, your whole life, you, above all who liſten to me, and who conſider the duplicity of your character as knowledge of the world and of the court; your whole life has been only one train of diſſimulation and artifice; even your ſincereſt and moſt intimate friends have only, in part, known you; you were beyond the reach of the world, for you changed character, ſentiment, and inclination, according to circumſtances and the diſpoſition of thoſe to whom you wiſhed to make yourſelves agreeable; through theſe means you had acquired the reputation of ability and wiſdom; but there ſhall be ſeen, in its native colours, a mean and treacherous ſoul deſtitute of probity and truth, and whoſe principal virtue had been the concealment of its baſeneſs and meanneſs.

You, likewiſe, unfaithful ſoul, whom a ſex more jealous of honour and rendered ſtill more attentive to conceal your weakneſſes from the eyes of men, you were ſo artful in ſaving yourſelf from a diſcovery; you took from ſo far, and ſo ſurely, your meaſures to deceive the eyes of a huſband, the vigilance of a mother, and, perhaps the probity of a confeſſor: you would not have ſurvived the accident which had therein betrayed your precautions and artifices. Vain cares! you only covered your lewdneſſes, ſays the prophet, with a ſpider's web, which, on that great day, the Son of Man ſhall diſſipate with a ſingle blaſt of his mouth. In the preſence of all aſſembled nations, ſayeth the Lord, I will gather around thee all thy lovers. They ſhall ſee that eternal train of artifices, diſguiſes, and meanneſſes; that ſhameful traffic of proteſtations and oaths which you made inſtrumental to ſo many different paſſions, and, at the ſame

time, to lull their credulity; they ſhall ſee them, and, tracing even to the ſource thoſe criminal favours which you had beſtowed on them, they ſhall find them not in their pretended merit as you had wiſhed them to believe, but in your own infamous character, in a heart naturally lewd; you, who pique yourſelves on having a heart ſo noble, ſo ſincere, and ſo incapable of being touched but by merit alone. And all this ſhall take place before the eyes of the univerſe; of thoſe friends whom an appearance of regularity had preſerved to you; of your relations who were ignorant of the diſgrace with which you covered them; of that huſband who had ſo much depended on your affection and fidelity.

O my God! is there an abyſs ſufficiently profound in the earth in which the unfaithful ſoul would not then wiſh to hide himſelf? For, in the world, men never ſee but the outſide and the ſcandal of our vices; and, beſides, our confuſion is ſhared and countenanced by thoſe who are continually culpable of the ſame faults. But, before the tribunal of Jeſus Chriſt, your weakneſſes ſhall be ſeen even in your heart; that is to ſay, their birth, their progreſs, their moſt private motives, and a thouſand ſhameful and perſonal circumſtances, which, even more than the crimes themſelves, ſhall cover you with ſhame: it will be a confuſion in which none ſhall bear a ſhare, and, conſequently, will be entirely your own.

Laſtly, The final circumſtance, which ſhall render the ſhame of the ſinner overwhelming, is his perſonal qualities.

You paſſed in the world for a faithful, ſincere, and generous friend: it will be ſeen that you were vile, perfidious, intereſted,

intereſted, without faith, honour, probity, conſcience, or character. You gave yourſelf out for a towering mind above all the vulgar prejudices; and you ſhall unfold the moſt humiliating meanneſſes and circumſtances, at which the vileſt ſoul would almoſt expire with ſhame. In the world you were regarded as a man of integrity, and of an approved probity in the adminiſtration of your charge; that reputation had perhaps attracted freſh honours, and acquired to you the public confidence; you, nevertheleſs, abuſed the credulity of men; thoſe pompous ſhews of equity concealed an unjuſt and ſervile ſoul, and a thouſand times had your fidelity been in ſecret betrayed, and your conſcience corrupted by views of fortune and motives of intereſt; you were apparently adorned with ſanctity and righteouſneſs; you had always aſſumed the ſemblance of the juſt; you were believed to be the friend of God, and the faithful obſerver of his law; yet your heart was not upright before the Lord; under the cloak of religion you covered a defiled conſcience and ignominious concealments; you walked in the way of holy things more ſecurely to attain your purpoſes. Ah! on that day of revelation you go to undeceive the whole univerſe; thoſe who had ſeen you on the earth, aſtoniſhed at your unexpected lot, ſhall ſearch among the reprobate to diſcover the upright man; the hope of the hypocrite ſhall then be overthrown: you unjuſtly had enjoyed the eſteem of men; you ſhall be known and God avenged. Laſtly, Yet ſhall I dare to ſay it, and here reveal the ſhame of my brethren? You were perhaps the diſpenſer of holy things, high in honour in the temple of God; the charge of faith, of doctrine, and of piety, was intruſted to you; you appeared every day in the ſanctuary, clothed in the formidable tokens of your dignity, offering up pure gifts and ſacrifices without ſtain; you were intruſted with the ſecrecies of conſciences; you ſuſtained

tained the weak in faith; you ſpoke of wiſdom among the inſtructed; and, under all that religion hath moſt auguſt or moſt holy, you perhaps concealed whatever the earth has moſt execrable. You were an impoſtor, a man of ſin ſeated in the temple of God; you inſtructed others, and you taught not yourſelf; you inſpired horror againſt idols, and your days were only numbered by your ſacrileges. Ah! the myſtery of iniquity ſhall then be revealed; and you ſhall at laſt be known for what you have always been, the curſe of heaven and the ſhame of the earth.

Behold, my brethren, all the confuſion with which the criminal ſoul ſhall be overwhelmed. And it will not be a tranſitory confuſion. In the world we have only the firſt ſhame of a fault to undergo: the noiſe of it gradually dies away; new adventures at laſt take place of ours; and the remembrance of our diſgrace fades away, and diſappears with the rumour which had publiſhed them. But, at the great day, ſhame ſhall eternally remain upon the criminal ſoul; there ſhall no longer be any freſh events to obliterate his crimes and his confuſion; nothing ſhall more change: all ſhall be fixed and eternal: that which he ſhall have appeared before the tribunal of Jeſus Chriſt, that will he for ever appear: even the nature of his torments ſhall inceſſantly publiſh the nature of his crimes; and his ſhame ſhall every day be renewed in his puniſhment. My brethren, reflections here are needleſs; and, if ſome remains of faith ſtill exiſt within you, it is for you to ſound your own conſciences, and from this moment, to adopt ſuch meaſures as may enable you to ſuſtain the manifeſtation of that great day.

But, after having ſhewn to you the public confuſion with which the ſinner ſhall be covered; why may not I expoſe

to

to you here what ſhall be the glory and the conſolation of the truly juſt man, when the ſecrecies of his conſcience ſhall be laid open to the univerſe; when the whole myſtery of his heart ſhall be unfolded; of that heart, of which all the lovelineſs, concealed from the eyes of men was known only to God; of that heart in which he had always ſuppoſed ſtains and defilements; and of which his humility had concealed from himſelf all the holineſs and innocency; of that heart in which God alone had always dwelled, and which he had taken pleaſure in adorning and enriching with his gifts and grace! What new wonders ſhall that divine ſanctuary, hitherto ſo impenetrable, then offer to the eyes of the beholders, when the veil ſhall be removed from it! What fervent deſires! What ſecret victories! What heroical ſacrifices! What pure prayers! What tender lamentations! What faith! What grandeur! What elevation above all thoſe vain objects which form all the deſires and hopes of men! Then it ſhall indeed be ſeen, that nothing was ſo great, or ſo worthy of admiration in the world, as a truly juſt man; as thoſe ſouls who were conſidered as uſeleſs, becauſe they were ſo to our paſſions; and whoſe obſcure and retired life was ſo much deſpiſed. It ſhall be ſeen that the heart of the faithful ſoul poſſeſſed more luſtre and grandeur than all thoſe great events which take place on the earth, was alone worthy of being written down in the eternal books, and offered to the eyes of God a ſight more worthy of angels and men than all the victories and conqueſts, which here below, fill the vanity of hiſtories, to which pompous monuments are erected in order to eterniſe their remembrance, and which, then, ſhall no longer be conſidered but as puerile ſquabbles, or the fruit of pride and the human paſſions. Firſt diſorder repaired on that great day: vice concealed here below from public ſhame, and virtue from the applauſes it merits.

The

The ſecond diſorder, which the mixture of the good and of the bad gives birth to in the world, is the inequality of conditions, and the unjuſt exchange of their lots. It is with the preſent age as with the image of which Daniel explained the myſtery: the juſt, like the clay which we trample under our feet, or, like iron hardened in the fire of tribulation, in general, occupy here below, only the meaneſt and moſt contemptible ſtations; while, on the contrary, the ſinful and the worldly, typified by the gold and ſilver, vain objects of their paſſions, almoſt always find themſelves placed at the head of affairs, and in the moſt eminent places. Now, this is a diſorder; and, although the good be thereby exerciſed, and the wicked hardened; although this confuſion of good and evil enter into the order of Providence; and that, by ways and means impenetrable to man, God makes uſe of them to lead the juſt and the ſinner to his purpoſes, yet it is neceſſary that the Son of Man gather together all things; and that it ſhall at laſt be diſcerned between the righteous and the wicked; between him that ſerveth God, and him that ſerveth him not. Now, behold the grand ſpectacle of that laſt day: order ſhall be reeſtabliſhed; the good ſeparated from the wicked: the ſheep ſet on his right hand, and the goats on the left.

Separation, *1ſtly*, altogether new. It will not be demanded from you, in order to determine what rank you ought to hold in this awful ſcene, what were your names, your birth, your titles, or your dignities; theſe were but a vapour, which had no reality but in the public illuſion; you will be examined only to prove whether you be an unclean animal or an innocent ſheep: the prince ſhall not be ſeparated from the ſubject; the noble from the peaſant; the poor from the powerful; the conqueror from the vanquiſhed; but the chaff from the good grain; the veſſels of honour

honour from the veſſels of ſhame; the goats from the ſheep.

The Son of Man ſhall be ſeen from on high, caſting his regards over all the mingled nations and people aſſembled at his feet; recalling, in that view, the hiſtory of the univerſe, that is to ſay, of the paſſions or of the virtues of men; he ſhall be ſeen gathering together his choſen from the four quarters; chooſing them from among every tongue, every ſtation, and every nation; reuniting the children of Iſrael diſperſed through the univerſe; unfolding the ſecret hiſtory of an holy and new people; bringing forth to view heroes of faith till then unknown in the world; no more diſtinguiſhing ages by the victories of conquerors, by the eſtabliſhment or the fall of empires, by the politeneſs or the barbarity of the times, by the great characters who have blazed in every age, but by the diverſe triumphs of grace, by the hidden victories of the juſt over their paſſions, by the eſtabliſhment of his reign in a heart, by the heroical fortitude of a perſecuted believer. You ſhall ſee him change the face of all things, create a new heaven and a new earth, and reduce that infinite variety of people, titles, conditions, and dignities to a people holy, and a people reprobate, to the goats and the ſheep.

Separation, *2dly*, cruel. The father ſhall be ſeparated from his child; friend from friend; brother from brother: the one ſhall be taken, the other left. Death, which deprives us of the deareſt friends, and whoſe loſs occaſions to us ſo many ſighs and tears, leaves us, at leaſt, a conſolation in the hope of being one day reunited to them. Here, the ſeparation is eternal; no hope of reunion ſhall more exiſt; we ſhall no more have relatives, father, child, friend;

friend; no other ties than everlaſting flames, which ſhall for ever unite us to the reprobate.

Separation, *gädly*, ignominious. We are ſo touchy on a preference, when neglected, or left blended with the crowd on any ſplendid occaſion; we are ſo peeviſh and ſo irritated, when, in the diſtribution of favours, we ſee novices carrying off the palm and the principal offices; our ſervices forgotten, and thoſe, whom we had always ſeen far below us, now exalted and placed over our heads: but, on that grand day it is that preference ſhall be accompanied with circumſtances the moſt humiliating and the moſt galling to the criminal ſoul. In that univerſal ſilence, in that dreadful expectation, in which each one ſhall be for the deciſion of his deſtiny. You ſhall ſee the Son of Man advancing in the heavens, with crowns in one hand and the rod of wrath in the other, to carry off, from your ſide, a juſt ſoul whoſe innocence you, perhaps, had blackened by raſh diſcourſes, or whoſe virtue you had inſulted by impious pleaſantries; a believer who was, perhaps, born your ſubject; a Lazarus who in vain, perhaps, had importuned you with the recital of his wants and poverty; a rival whom you had always beheld with an eye of ſcorn, and upon whoſe ruins your intrigues and artifices had perhaps exalted you. You ſhall ſee the Son of Man place a crown of immortality on his head, ſeat him at his right hand, while you, like the proud Haman, rejected, humbled, and degraded, ſhall no longer have before your eyes but the preparation of your puniſhment.

Yes, my brethren, every galling and overwhelming circumſtance ſhall attend that preference. A ſavage converted to faith ſhall be ranked among the ſheep, while a Chriſtian inheritor of the promiſes ſhall be left among the goats.

goats. The layman ſhall aſcend, like the eagle over its prey, while the miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt ſhall grovel on the earth, covered with ſhame and reproach. The man of the world ſhall paſs to the right hand, while the recluſe paſſes to the left. The wiſe, the learned, the critic of the age, ſhall be driven to the ſide of the unclean; and the idiot, who knew not how to anſwer even the common ſalutations, ſhall be placed on a throne of glory and light. Rahab, a ſinful woman, ſhall mount up to the heavenly Sion along with the true Iſraelites; while the ſiſter of Moſes, and the ſpouſe of Jeſus Chriſt, ſhall be driven from the camp and the tents of Iſrael, and ſhall appear covered with a ſhameful leproſy. Thou art determined, O my God! that nothing ſhall be wanting towards the deſpair of the criminal ſoul. It is not ſufficient that he ſhall be overwhelmed under the weight of his own miſery; thou ſhalt create for him a new puniſhment in the felicity of the juſt, who, preferred to him, ſhall be ſeen conducted by angels into the boſom of immortality.

What change of ſcene, my brethren, in the univerſe! It is then that, all ſcandals being plucked out from the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, and the juſt wholly ſeparated from the ſinful, they ſhall form a holy nation, a choſen race, and the church of the firſtborn, whoſe names were written down in heaven. It is then that the commerce of the wicked, inevitable on this earth, ſhall no longer occaſion their faith to lament, or their innocence to tremble. It is then that their lot, no longer connected with the unfaithful or the hypocrite, ſhall no more conſtrain them to be witneſſes of their crimes, and ſometimes even the involuntary agents of their paſſions. It is then that, all the bonds of ſociety, of authority, or dependence, which attached them on this earth to the impious and to the worldly, be-

ing broken aſunder, they ſhall no longer ſay, with the prophet, "Lord, why lengtheneſt thou out here our baniſh-
"ment and our ſojourning? How long ſhall the land
"mourn, and the herbs of every field wither for the
"wickedneſs of them that dwell therein?" Laſtly, Then it is that their tears ſhall be changed into joy, and their ſighs into thankſgivings; they ſhall paſs to the right hand as the ſheep, while the left ſhall be reſerved for the goats and the impious.

The diſpoſition of the univerſe thus laid out; all nations of the earth thus divided; each one fixed in the place alſotted to him; ſurpriſe, terror, deſpair, and confuſion marked in the countenance of one part; on that of the other, joy, ſerenity, and confidence: the eyes of the juſt raiſed on high towards the Son of Man, from whom they await their deliverance; thoſe of the impious frightfully fixed on the earth, and almoſt piercing the abyſs with their looks, as if already to mark out the place which is deſtined for them: the King of glory, ſays the goſpel, placed in the middle of two nations, ſhall come forward; and, turning towards thoſe who ſhall be at his right hand, with an aſpect full of ſweetneſs and majeſty, and ſufficient of itſelf to conſole them for all their paſt ſufferings, he will ſay to them, "Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the
"kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the
"world. The ſinful had always conſidered you as the
"outcaſt, and the moſt uſeleſs portion of the earth; let
"them now learn that the world itſelf exiſted only for
"you, that all was created for you, and that all hath finiſhed from the moment that your number was completed.
"Quit, then, an earth where you had always been travel-
"lers and ſtrangers; follow me into the immortal ways of
"my glory and felicity, as you have followed me in thoſe

"of

" of my humiliation and ſufferings. Your toils have en-
" dured but for an inſtant; the happineſs you go to enjoy
" ſhall be without end."

Then, turning to the left hand, vengeance and fury in his eyes, here and there caſting the moſt dreadful looks, like avenging thunderbolts, on that crowd of guilty; with a voice, ſays a prophet, which ſhall burſt open the bowels of the abyſs to ſwallow them up, he ſhall ſay, not as upon the croſs, Father, pardon them, for they know not what they do, but, " Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſt-
" ing fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. You
" were the choſen of the earth, you are the curſed of my
" Father; your pleaſures have been fleeting and tranſitory,
" your anguiſh ſhall be eternal." The juſt, then, mounting with the Son of Man, ſhall begin to ſing this heavenly ſong, Thou art rich in mercy, Lord, and thou haſt crowned thy gifts in recompenſing our good actions. Then ſhall the impious curſe the Author of their being, and the fatal day which brought them forth; or, rather, they ſhall enter into wrath againſt themſelves, as the authors of their miſery and deſtruction. The abyſs ſhall open; the heavens ſhall bow down; the reprobate, ſays the goſpel, ſhall go into everlaſting puniſhment, and the juſt into life eternal. Behold a lot which ſhall change no more.

After a relation ſo awful, and ſo proper to make an impreſſion on the moſt hardened hearts, I cannot conclude without addreſſing to you the ſame words which Moſes formerly addreſſed to the Iſraelites after having laid before them the dreadful threatenings, and the ſoothing promiſes contained in the Book of the Law. " Children of Iſrael,
" behold I ſet before you this day a bleſſing and a curſe: a
" bleſſing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your
" God

" God which I command you this day; and a curſe, if ye " will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, " but turn aſide, out of the way which I command you this " day, to go after other gods which ye have not known."

Behold, my brethren, what I ſay to you in concluding a ſubject ſo terrible. It now belongs to you to chooſe and to declare yourſelves; the right hand and the left are before you: the promiſes and the threatenings: the bleſſings and the curſes. Your deſtiny turns on this awful alternative: you either ſhall be on the ſide of ſatan and his angels, or you ſhall be choſen with Jeſus Chriſt and his ſaints. Here there is no middle way: I have pointed out the path which leads to life, and that which leads to perdition. In which of theſe two do you now walk? And on which ſide do you believe that you ſhould find yourſelves, were you, at this moment, to appear before the awful tribunal? We die as we have lived: tremble leſt your deſtiny of this day be your everlaſting deſtiny. Quit, and, from this moment, the ways of the ſinful; begin now to live like the juſt, if you wiſh, on that laſt day, to be placed at the right hand, and to mount, along with them, into the abode of a bleſſed immortality.

SERMON

SERMON XV.

THE HAPPINESS OF THE JUST.

MATTHEW v. 4.

Bleſſed are they who mourn, for they ſhall be comforted.

SIRE,

IF the world were to ſpeak to you in place of Jeſus Chriſt, it undoubtedly would not ſay, "bleſſed are they who "mourn."

Happy, would it ſay, the prince who has never fought but to conquer, and whoſe mind has always been ſuperior either to the danger or to the victory: who, during the courſe of a long and a proſperous reign, has enjoyed, and ſtill continues to enjoy, at his eaſe, the fruits of his glory, the love of his people, the eſteem of his enemies, the advantage of his conqueſts, the ſplendour of his actions, the wiſdom of his laws, and the auguſt proſpect of a numerous poſterity; and who has nothing left now to deſire, but the continuance of what he poſſeſſes.

In this manner would the world ſpeak; but, Sire, Jeſus Chriſt does not ſpeak like the world.

Happy,

Happy, ſays he to you, not him who is the admiration of his age; but he who makes his ſtudy of the age to come, and lives in the contempt of himſelf and of all the things of the earth; for to him is the kingdom of heaven. Not him whoſe reign and actions hiſtory will immortalize in the remembrance of men; but he whoſe tears ſhall have effaced the hiſtory of his ſins from the remembrance even of God; for he ſhall be for ever conſoled. Not him who, by new conqueſts, ſhall have extended the bounds of his empire; but he who has ſucceeded in confining his deſires and his paſſions within the limits of the law of God; for he ſhall inherit a kingdom more durable than the empire of the univerſe. Not him who, exalted by the voice of nations above all preceding princes, tranquilly enjoys his greatneſs and his fame; but he who, finding nothing even on the throne worthy of his heart, ſeeks no perfect happineſs on this earth but in virtue and in righteouſneſs; for he ſhall be filled. Not him to whom men have given the pompous titles of great and invincible; but he to whom the wretched ſhall give, before the tribunal of Jeſus Chriſt, the title of father and of merciful; for he ſhall be treated with mercy. Laſtly, Happy, not him who, always diſpoſer of the lot of his enemies, has more than once more given peace to the earth; but he who has been enabled to give it to himſelf, and to baniſh from his heart, all the vices and diſorderly inclinations which diſturb its tranquillity; for he ſhall be called a child of God.

Such, Sire, are thoſe whom Jeſus Chriſt calls happy: and the goſpel acknowledges no other happineſs on the earth than virtue and innocence.

Great God! it is not then that long train of unexampled proſperities, with which thou haſt favoured the glory of his reign,

reign, that can render him the happieſt of kings. He is thereby great; but he is not thereby happy. His felicity has commenced with his piety. Whatever does not ſanctify, man can never make the happineſs of man. Whatever does not place thee, O my God! in an heart, places only vanities which leave it empty, or real evils which fill it with diſquiet; and a pure conſcience is the only reſource of real enjoyments.

It is to this truth the church, on the occaſion of this ſolemnity, confines its whole fruit. As the common error, that the life of the ſaints has been gloomy and diſagreeable, is one of the principal artifices employed by the world in order to prevent us from imitating them, the church, in renewing their memory on this day, gives us to remember, at the ſame time, that not only they now enjoy an immortal felicity in heaven, but alſo that they have been the only happy of the earth, and that he who carries iniquity in his boſom carries terror and anxiety; and that the lot of the godly is a thouſand times more tranquil and more ſatisfactory, even in this world, than that of ſinners.

But, in what does the happineſs of the juſt in this life conſiſt? It conſiſts, *1ſtly*, In the manifeſtation of truth concealed from the ſages of the world. *2dly*, In the reliſh of charity denied to the lovers of the world. In the lights of faith which ſoften all the ſufferings of the believing ſoul, and which render thoſe of the ſinner ſtill more bitter: this is my firſt point. In the comforts of grace which calm all the paſſions, and which, denied to a corrupted heart, leave it a prey to itſelf: is the laſt. Let us examine theſe two truths ſo calculated to render virtue amiable, and the example of the ſaints beneficial.

PART

PART I. Our ſorrows proceed, in general, from our errors; and we are unhappy only becauſe we are inadequate judges of what is really good and evil. The juſt, who are children of light, are, therefore, much happier than ſinners, becauſe they are more enlightened. The ſame lights which correct their judgments alleviate their ſufferings: and faith, which ſhews the world to them ſuch as it is, changes, into ſources of conſolation for them, the very ſame events in which ſouls, delivered up to the paſſions, find the principle of all their diſquiets.

And in order to make you ſenſible of a truth ſo honourable to virtue, obſerve, I pray you, my brethren, that, whether a contrite ſoul recal the paſt, and thoſe times of error which preceded his penitence; whether he pay attention to what paſſes before his eyes in the world; or, laſtly, whether he look forward to the future, every thing conſoles, every thing ſtrengthens him in the cauſe of virtue which he has adopted, every thing unites in rendering his condition infinitely more pleaſing than that of a ſoul who lives in diſſipation, and who finds, in theſe three ſituations, only bitterneſs and inward terrors.

For, in the firſt place, however the ſinner may be delivered up to all the fervency of his heart, he is not ſo violently hurried away, by preſent gratifications, but that he ſometimes gives a look back to thoſe years of iniquity which he amaſſes behind him. Thoſe days of darkneſs which he has conſecrated to debauchery, have not ſo completely periſhed, but that, in certain moments, they obtrude themſelves upon his remembrance. Gloomy and troubleſome images force themſelves upon his ſoul, and, from time to time, arouſe him from his lethargy by holding out, as if collected into one point, that ſhocking maſs of crimes

which

which make leſs impreſſion, during their commiſſion, becauſe he only ſees them in ſucceſſion. At one glance of his eye he ſees favours always contemned, inſpirations always rejected, a vile perverſion of a diſpoſition naturally good and originally formed, it appears, for virtue; weakneſſes at which he now bluſhes, phantoms and horrors againſt which he would wiſh for ever to ſhut his eyes.

Such is what the ſinner leaves behind him. He is miſerable if he look back to the paſt. His whole happineſs is, as it were, ſhut up in the preſent moment; and, to be happy, he muſt never think, but allow himſelf, like the dumb creation, to be led away by the attraction of the preſent objects; and, to preſerve his tranquillity, he muſt either extinguiſh or brutify his reaſon. And thence thoſe maxims ſo unworthy of humanity, and ſo circulated in the world; that too much reaſon is a ſorry advantage; that reflections ſpoil all the pleaſures of life; and, that, to be happy, the leſs we think the better. O man! was it for thy miſery then that Heaven had given thee that reaſon by which thou art enlightened, or to aſſiſt thee in ſearch of the truth, which alone can render thee happy? Could that divine light, which embelliſhes thy being, be a puniſhment rather than a gift of the Creator? And ſhould it ſo glorioufly diſtinguiſh thee from the beaſt only that thy condition may be more wretched?

Yes, my brethren, ſuch is the lot of an unbelieving ſoul. Intoxication, delirium of paſſion, and the extinction of all reaſon alone can render him happy; and, as that ſituation is merely momentary, the inſtant the mind becomes calm and regains itſelf, the charm ceaſes, happineſs takes wing, and man finds himſelf alone with his conſcience and his crimes.

But how different, O my God! is the lot of a ſoul who walks in the ways, and how much to be pitied is the world which knows thee not! In effect the ſweeteſt thoughts of a righteous ſoul are thoſe by which the paſt are recalled. He there encounters, it is true, that portion of his life which had been engroſſed by the world and the paſſions; and the remembrance, I confeſs, fills him with ſhame before the ſanctity of his God, and forces from him tears of compunction and ſorrow. But, what conſolation in his tears and his grief!

For, my brethren, a contrite ſoul can never retrace the whole train of his paſt errors without diſcovering all the proceedings of God's mercy upon him. The ſingular ways by which his wiſdom hath gradually, and, as it were, ſtep by ſtep, conducted him to the bleſſed moment of his converſion. So many unexpected favourable circumſtances, ſo many accidents of diſgrace, of loſs, of death, of treachery, and of affliction; all provided by a watchful Providence to facilitate the means of breaking aſunder his chains. Thoſe ſpecial attentions of God, even in the paths of iniquity. Thoſe diſguſts, even in the midſt of his pleaſures, provided for him by his goodneſs. Thoſe inward calls which inceſſantly whiſpered to him, return to virtue and to duty. That internal monitor, which, go where he would, never left him, and unceaſingly repeated to him, as formerly to St. Auguſtin: Fool! How long wilt thou hunt after pleaſures which can never make thee happy? When, by terminating thy crimes, wilt thou terminate thy troubles? What more is yet required to open thine eyes upon the world, than thine own experience itſelf, of thy wearineſs and unhappineſs while ſerving it? Try if, in belonging to me, thou ſhalt not be more happy, and if I ſuffice not to fill the ſoul which poſſeſſes me?

Such

Such is what the paſt offers to a contrite ſoul. It there ſees the accomplices of its former pleaſures ſtill delivered up, by God's juſtice, to the errors of the world and of the paſſions, and it alone choſen, ſeparated, and called to the truth.

With what peace and conſolation does that reflection fill the believing ſoul! "How infinite, O my God," cries he with the prophet, "are thy mercies! Thou haſt covered "me in my mother's womb: Thou haſt compaſſed my "path, and my lying down, and all my ways have been "known to thee: what have I done for thee more than "ſo many other ſinners whoſe eyes thou deigneſt not "to open, and to manifeſt the ſeverity of thy judgments "and of thy juſtice? How marvelous, O God! are all "thy works, and that my ſoul knoweth right well." Firſt advantage of righteous ſouls: the remembrance even of their paſt infidelities conſoles them.

But, ſecondly, if they find ſources of ſolid conſolations in reviewing the paſt, their piety is not leſs comforted while viewing the preſent occurrences of the world. And here, my brethren, you will preſently ſee how eſſentially requiſite is virtue to the happineſs of life, and how that very world, which gives birth to all the paſſions, and, conſequently, to all the diſquietudes of ſinners, becomes the ſweeteſt and moſt conſolatory exerciſe of the faith of the juſt.

What indeed is the world even to the worldly themſelves, who love it, who ſeem intoxicated with its delights, and who cannot do without it? The world? It is an eternal ſervitude where no one lives for himſelf, and where, in order to be happy, we muſt bring ourſelves to hug our chains, and to love our ſlavery. The world? It is a daily

revolution

revolution of events, which ſucceſſively arouſe, in the hearts of its partiſans, the moſt violent and the moſt melancholy paſſions; cruel antipathies, hateful perplexities, torturing fears, devouring jealouſies, and corroding cares. The world? It is a land of curſe, where even its pleaſures are productive only of bitterneſs and thorns. Gaming fatigues and exhauſts by its frenzies and caprices: converſation becomes wearifome through the contrariety of tempers and the oppoſition of ſentiments: paſſions and criminal attachments are followed with their diſguſts, their diſappointments, and their unpleaſant reports: theatres, no longer having as ſpectators but ſouls groſsly diſſolute and incapable of being rouſed but by the moſt ſhocking exceſſes of debauchery, become inſipid while moving only thoſe delicate paſſions, which only ſerve to ſhew guilt from afar, and to lay ſnares for innocence. Laſtly, the world is a place where hope itſelf, conſidered as a paſſion ſo ſweet and ſo pleaſing, renders all men unhappy; where thoſe who have nothing more to hope, believe themſelves ſtill more miſerable; where every thing that pleaſes ſoon ceaſes to pleaſe; and where inanity or liſtleſs inſipidity is almoſt the beſt and moſt ſupportable lot to be expected. Such is the world my brethren; nor is that obſcure world, to which neither the great pleaſures, nor the charms of proſperity, of favour, and of influence are known: it is the world in its moſt brilliant point of view; it is the world of the court; it is you yourſelves who now liſten to me. Such is the world; nor is this one of thoſe fanciful paintings of which the reality is no where to be found. I paint the world after your own heart, that is to ſay, ſuch as you know it to be, and ſuch as you yourſelves continually experience it.

Such,

Such, nevertheleſs, is the place in which all ſinners ſeek their happineſs. That is their country. There they would willingly eterniſe themſelves. Such is that world which they prefer to the eternal inheritance, and to all the promiſes of faith. Great God! how juſt art thou in puniſhing man through his paſſions themſelves, and to permit that, wiſhing to ſeek his happineſs elſewhere than in thee who alone art the true peace of his heart, he form for himſelf a ridiculous felicity of his fears, his diſguſts, his wearineſſes, and his disquietudes!

But that which is ſo fortunate here for virtue, is that the ſame world, ſo tireſome and ſo inſupportable to ſinners who ſeek their happineſs in it, becomes a ſource of the moſt ſoothing reflections to the righteous, who conſider it as an exilement and a foreign land.

For, in the *firſt* place, the inconſtancy of the world, ſo dreaded by thoſe delivered up to it, ſupplies a thouſand motives of conſolation to the believing ſoul. Nothing appears to him either conſtant or durable upon the earth; neither the moſt flouriſhing fortunes, nor the warmeſt friendſhips, nor the moſt brilliant reputations, nor the moſt envied favour. He ſees a ſovereign wiſdom through all, which delights, it would appear, in making a ſport of men, by alternately exalting them on the ruins of each other; by hurling down thoſe at the top of the wheel, in order to elevate thoſe who, only a moment before, were groveling at the bottom; by introducing, every day, on the theatre of life new heroes to eclipſe all thoſe who formerly played on it ſo brilliant a part; by inceſſantly giving new ſcenes to the univerſe. He ſees men paſſing their whole life in ferments, projects, and plots; ever on the watch

watch to ſurpriſe each other, or to avoid being ſurpriſed; always eager and active to profit of the retreat, the diſgrace, or the death of a rival; and of theſe grand leſſons, ſo fitted to inculcate contempt of the world, make only freſh motives of ambition and cupidity: always engroſſed either by their fears or by their hopes; always uneaſy either for the preſent or for the future; never tranquil, all ſtruggling for quiet, yet every moment removing themſelves farther and farther from it.

O man! why art thou ſo ingenious in rendering thyſelf miſerable? Such is, then, the reflection of the believing ſoul. That happineſs thou ſeekeſt is more eaſily attained. It is neceſſary neither to traverſe ſeas nor to conquer kingdoms. Depart not from thyſelf and thou wilt be happy.

How ſweet do the ſorrows of virtue then appear to the godly man, when he compares them with the cruel chagrins and the endleſs agitations of ſinners! How tranſported to have at laſt found a place of reſt and of ſafety, while he ſees the lovers of the world ſtill ſadly toſt about at the mercy of the paſſions and of human hopes! Thus the Iſraelites formerly eſcaped from the danger of the Red Sea, ſeeing from afar Pharaoh and all the nobility of Egypt ſtill at the mercy of the waters, felt all the luxury of their own ſafety, thought the barren paths of the deſert delightful, and were inſenſible to every hardſhip of their journey; and, comparing their lot with that of the Egyptians, far from giving vent to a complaint or a murmur, they ſung with Moſes that divine hymn of praiſe and of thankſgiving in which are celebrated, with ſuch magnificence, the wonders and the tender mercies of the Lord.

2dly,

2*dly*, The injuſtice of the world, ſo humbling to thoſe who love it, when they ſee themſelves forgotten, neglected, and ſacrificed to unworthy rivals, is alſo a fund of ſoothing reflections to a ſoul who deſpiſes it and fears only the Lord. For, what reſource is left to a ſinner who, after having ſacrificed his eaſe, his conſcience, his wealth, his youth, and his health, to the world and to his maſters; after having ſubmitted in ſilence to every circumſtance the moſt mortifying to the mind, ſees at once, and without knowing why, the gates of favour and advancement for ever ſhut againſt him; ſees places ſnatched from him to which he was entitled by his ſervices, and of which he thought himſelf already certain; threatened, ſhould he dare to murmur, with the loſs of thoſe he ſtill enjoys; forced to crouch to more fortunate rivals, and to be at the beck of thoſe whom, only a little before, he had deemed unworthy of even receiving his orders? Shall he retire far from the world, to evaporate, in continual invectives againſt it, the ſpleen and the rancour of his heart, and thus revenge himſelf of the injuſtice of men? But of what avail will be his retirement? It will afford only more leiſure for retroſpection, and fewer relaxations from chagrin. Shall he try to conſole himſelf with ſimilar examples? But our misfortunes never, as we think, reſemble thoſe of others; and, beſides, what conſolation can it be to have our ſorrows renewed by ſeeing their image reflected from others? Shall he entrench himſelf in ſtrength of mind, and in a vain philoſophy? But, in ſolitude, reaſon ſoon deſcends from its pride; we may be philoſophers for the public, but we are only men with ourſelves. Shall he fly, as a reſource, to voluptuouſneſs, and to other infamous pleaſures? But, in changing the paſſion, the heart only changes the puniſhment. Shall he ſeek, in indolence and inactivity, an happineſs he has never been able to find in all the fervency of

of hopes and pretenſions? A criminal conſcience may become indifferent, but it is not thereby more tranquil. One may ceaſe to feel misfortune and diſgrace, but infidelities and crimes muſt always be felt. No, my brethren, the unhappy ſinner is ſo without reſource. Every comfort is for ever fled from the worldly ſoul from the moment that he is deſerted by the world.

But the righteous man learns to deſpiſe the world even in the contempt which the world has for him. The injuſtice of men, with reſpect to him, only puts him in mind that he ſerves a more equitable Maſter, who can neither be influenced nor prejudiced; who ſees nothing in us but what, in reality, there is; who determines our deſtinies upon our hearts alone, and with whom we have nothing but our own conſcience to dread: conſequently, that they are happy who ſerve him; that his ingratitude is not to be feared; that every thing done for him is faithfully recorded; that, far from concealing or neglecting our ſufferings and our ſervices, he gives us credit even for our good wiſhes; and that nothing is loſt with him but what is not done ſolely for him.

Now, in theſe lights of faith, what a freſh fund of conſolation for a believing ſoul! How little is the world, in this point of view, with all its ſcorns and ill uſage, capable of affecting him! Then it is that, throwing himſelf into the boſom of God, and viewing, with Chriſtian eyes, the nothingneſs and vanity of all human things, he feels in a moment all his inquietudes, inſeparable from nature, changed into the ſweeteſt peace; a ray of light ſhines in his ſoul, and reeſtabliſhes ſerenity; a trait of conſolation penetrates his heart, and everyſ orrow is alleviated. Ah! my brethren, how ſweet to ſerve him, who alone can render

der happy thoſe who ſerve him! Why, O bleſſed condition of virtue, art thou not better known to men! And wherefore art thou held out as a diſagreeable and ſorrowful lot, thou who alone canſt conſole the miſeries and alleviate all the ſufferings of this baniſhment?

Laſtly, The judgments of the world, ſource of ſo many chagrins for the worldly, complete ſtill more the conſolation of the believing ſoul. For the torture of the lovers of the world is that of being continually expoſed to the judgments, that is to ſay, to the cenſures, to the deriſions, to the malignity of each other. In vain do we deſpiſe the men: we wiſh to be eſteemed even by thoſe we deſpiſe. In vain are we exalted above others: the more we are exalted, we are only the more expoſed to the criticiſms and to the obſervations of the multitude, and we much more poignantly feel the cenſures of thoſe from whom homages alone were to have been expected. In vain may the ſuffrage of the public be in our favour; contempt is ſo much the more ſtinging as it is unuſual and rare. In vain may we retaliate with cenſures yet more biting and keen; reſentment and revenge always ſuppoſe a ſenſe of guilt; and, beſides, the chagrin of having encountered ſcorn is much more lively than any pleaſure that can accrue from retorting it. Laſtly, From the moment that you live ſolely for the world, and that your pleaſures or your vexations depend wholly on it, the judgments of the world can never be indifferent to you.

Nevertheleſs, it is in the midſt of all theſe vexations that happineſs muſt be at leaſt profeſſed. Every thing attributed to you, either by truth or vanity, is called in queſtion: your birth, your talents, your reputation, your ſervices, your ſucceſs, your prudence, and even your honour. It

you go to wreck, your incapacity accounts for it: if ſucceſsful, the honour is given to chance, or to your inferiors: if you enjoy the good opinion of the public, the judgment of the more knowing is appealed to from the popular error; if poſſeſſed of the art of pleaſing, it is immediately ſaid that you have made a thorough uſe of your talents, and that you have been only too agreeable: if your conduct be ſuperior to any attack, the moſt poignant ridicule is directed againſt your temper. Laſtly, Be whom ye may, high or low, prince or ſubject, the moſt deſirable ſituation for your vanity is that of being unacquainted with the world's opinion of you. Such is the life of the world. The ſame paſſions which bind us together, diſunite us: envy and deſtruction blacken our nobleſt qualities; and our gratifications find cenſurers even in thoſe who copy them.

But a believing ſoul is ſheltered from all theſe uneaſineſſes. As he courts not the eſteem of men, neither does he fear their ſcorn; as he has no intention of laying himſelf out to pleaſe, neither is he ſurpriſed to find that he has not done it. God, who ſees him, is the only Judge he fears, and who, at the ſame time, conſoles him for the judgments of men. His glory is the teſtimony of his own conſcience. His reputation he ſeeks in the fulfilment of his duty. He conſiders the ſuffrages of the world, as the rock of virtue, or as the reward of vice; and, without even paying attention to its judgments, he is ſatisfied with giving it good examples. But what do I ſay, my brethren? The world itſelf, all worldly as it is, ſo full of cenſures, malignity, and contempt for its own worſhippers, is forced to reſpect the virtue of thoſe who hate and deſpiſe it. It appears that virtue imprints, on the perſon of a real righteous man, a dignity, a ſomething I know

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not what, of divine, which attracts the veneration and almoſt the worſhip of worldly ſouls: it appears that his intimate union with Jeſus Chriſt occaſions his being irradiated, as I may ſay, like the three diſciples on the holy mount, with a part of that celeſtial ſplendour which the Father ſhed around his well-beloved Son, and by which all liberty ceaſes of refuſing homage. It is an inalienable right which virtue has over the heart of men; and, by a deplorable caprice, the world deſpiſes the paſſions it inſpires, and reſpects the virtue it ſtrives againſt. Not that the eſteem of the world, ſo worthy itſelf of being deſpiſed, can be any great conſolations to the believing ſoul. But his conſolation is, that he ſees the world condemned even by the world, its pleaſures decried even by thoſe who hunt after them, ſinners become the apologiſts of virtue, and the life of the world to paſs ſorrowfully away in doing what they condemn, and flying from what they approve.

Such is the manner in which the preſent age becomes a ſource of conſolatory reflections to a Chriſtian ſoul; but, in the thought of futurity, he alſo finds conſolations which are changed into inward and continual terrors for ſinners: Laſt advantage drawn by the juſt from the lights of faith. The magnificence of its promiſes ſuſtains and conſoles them: they await the bleſſed hope, and that happy moment when they ſhall be aſſociated with the church of heaven, reunited to their brethren whom they had left on the earth, received eternal citizens of the heavenly Jeruſalem, incorporated in that immortal aſſembly of the elect, where charity will be the law that ſhall unite them; truth, the flame that ſhall enlighten them; and eternity, the meaſure of their felicity.

Theſe

Theſe thoughts are ſo much the more conſoling to the godly, as they are founded on the truth of God himſelf. They know that, in ſacrificing the preſent, they ſacrifice nothing; that, in the twinkling of an eye all ſhall have paſſed away; that, whatever muſt have an end cannot long endure; that this moment of tribulation ought to be reckoned as nothing, when put in competition with that eternal weight of glory which he prepareth for us; and that the rapid paſſage of preſent things ſcarcely deſerves that we ſhould be at the pains of numbering the years and the ages.

I know that faith may ſubſiſt with criminal manners; and that the ſanctifying grace is often loſt without loſing a ſincere ſubmiſſion to the truths revealed to us by the Spirit of God. But the certitude of faith, ſo conſoling to the righteous ſoul, is no longer for the ſinner who ſtill believes but an inexhauſtible fund of inward anxieties and cruel terrors. For, the more that ſinners like you, who bear upon your conſcience the ſink of a whole life of irregularity, are convinced of the truths of faith, the more inevitable muſt the puniſhments and the miſery appear with which it threatens ſuch ſinners. All the truths offered to your faith, in the holy doctrine, excite freſh alarms in your breaſt. Thoſe divine lights, which are the ſource of all conſolation to believing ſouls, become, within you, only avenging lights which diſquiet, agoniſe, and judge you; which, like a mirror, hold up continually to your ſight what you would wiſh never to ſee; which enlighten you, in ſpite of yourſelves, on what you would wiſh to be for ever ignorant. Your faith itſelf conſtitutes your puniſhment before hand. Your religion is, here below, if I may venture to ſay ſo, your hell; and, the more you are convinced

convinced of the truth, the more unhappy do you live. O God! how great is thy goodneſs towards man, in having rendered virtue neceſſary even to his quiet, and in thus attracting him to thee, by making it impoſſible for him to be happy without thee!

And here, my dear hearer, allow me to recal you to yourſelf. When the lot of a criminal ſoul ſhould not be ſo fearful for the age to come, ſee if, even in this world, it appears much to be envied: his afflictions are without reſource, his evils without conſolation, even his pleaſures without enjoyment; his anxieties upon the preſent endleſs, his reflections on the paſt and on the future gloomy and ſad; his faith is the ſource of all his anguiſh; his lights of all his deſpair. What a ſituation! What a miſerable lot! What ſhocking changes are operated, by a ſingle act of guilt, both internal and outwardly on man! How dearly does he purchaſe eternal miſery! And, is it not true that the way of the world and of the paſſions is ſtill infinitely more arduous and painful than that of the goſpel; and that there is more toil and vexation of ſpirit in gaining the kingdom of hell, if it be proper to ſpeak in this manner, than in gaining the kingdom of heaven? O innocence of heart, what bleſſings doſt thou not bring with thee to man! O man, what loſeſt thou not when thou loſeſt thine innocence of heart! Thou loſeſt all the conſolations of faith, the ſweeteſt occupation of the piety of the righteous; but thou alſo depriveſt thyſelf of all the comforts of grace by which the lot of the godly is rendered ſo truly enviable here below.

PART II. When comforts and conſolation, ſays St. Auguſtin, are promiſed to worldly ſouls in the obſervance of the law of God, they conſider our promiſes as a pious mode of

of ſpeaking employed to give credit and conſequence to virtue; and, as a heart which has never taſted of theſe chaſte delights is alſo incapable of comprehending them, we are obliged, continues that holy father, to reply to them, "How wouldſt thou that we convince thee?" We cannot ſay unto thee: "O taſte and ſee that the Lord is good!" ſeeing a diſeaſed and vitiated heart can have no reliſh for the things in heaven. Give us an heart that loves, and it will feel the truth of every thing we ſay.

My deſign, therefore, here, is not ſo much to enlarge upon all the inward operations of grace in the heart of the juſt, as to contraſt the happy ſituation in which it places them, here below, with the melancholy lot of ſinners, and, by this compariſon, to overwhelm vice and to encourage virtue. Now, I ſay, that grace provides two kinds of conſolations here below to the godly: the one internal and ſecret, the other external and ſenſible; both of them ſo eſſential to happineſs in this life, that no earthly gratification can ever compenſate for them.

The firſt internal benefit accruing to the believing ſoul from grace, is the eſtabliſhment of a ſolid peace in his heart, and a reconciliation with himſelf. For, my brethren, we all bear within us natural principles of equity, of modeſty, and of rectitude. We come into the world, as the apoſtle ſays, with the precepts of the law written in the heart. If virtue be not our firſt bent, we, at leaſt, feel that it is our firſt duty. In vain does paſſion ſometimes undertake ſecretly to perſuade us that we are born for pleaſure; and that, after all, tendencies implanted by nature, and which every one find within himſelf, can never be crimes. This foreign perſuaſion is ineffectual in quieting the criminal ſoul. It is a deſire, for we would heartily wiſh

to

to be lawful whatever pleaſes us; but it is not a real conviction. It is a ſaying, for it appears honourable to be above all vulgar prejudices; but it is not a feeling. Thus we always carry within us an incorruptible judge, who inceſſantly adopts the cauſe of virtue againſt our deareſt inclinations; who blends with our moſt headſtrong paſſions the troubleſome ideas of duty; and, who renders us unhappy even amidſt all our pleaſures and abundance.

Such is the ſtate of an impure and a ſullied conſcience. The ſinner is the ſecret and conſtant accuſer of himſelf; go where he will, he carries a torment within which the hand of man cannot allay. Unhappy in being unable to conquer his lawleſs tendencies: more unhappy ſtill in being unable to ſtifle his inceſſant remorſes. Enticed by his weakneſs, and withheld by his lights, the permiſſion of every crime is a conflict with himſelf: he reproaches himſelf for the iniquitous gratification, even in the moment of its enjoyment. What ſhall he do? Shall he combat his lights in order to appeaſe his conſcience? Shall he ſuſpect his faith to ſin in tranquillity? But unbelief is ſtill a more horrible ſtate than even guilt. To live without God, without worſhip, without principle, and without hope! To believe that the moſt abominable tranſgreſſions and the pureſt virtues are merely names! To conſider all men as only the vile and fantaſtical puppets of a low theatre, and merely intended for the amuſement of the ſpectators! To conſider himſelf as the offspring of chance, and the eternal poſſeſſion of nonentity! Theſe thoughts have ſomething I know not what, of gloomy and horrible, that the ſoul cannot look upon without horror; and it is true that unbelief is rather the deſpair of the ſinner than the refuge of the ſin. What, then, ſhall he do? Continually obliged to fly himſelf, leſt he find himſelf alone with his conſcience, he ranges from

object

object to object, from paſſion to paſſion, from precipice to precipice. He thinks to compenſate the emptineſs and the inſufficiency of pleaſures by their variety; there is none which he does not try. But in vain is his heart ſucceſſively offered to all the created; all the objects of his paſſions reply to him, ſays St. Auguſtin, "Deceive not "thyſelf in loving us; we are not that happineſs of which "thou art in ſearch; we cannot render thee happy: raiſe "thyſelf above the created, and, mounting to heaven, ſee "if he who hath formed us be not greater and more wor-"thy of being loved than we." Such is the lot of the ſinner.

Not that the heart of the juſt enjoys a tranquillity ſo unalterable but that they, in their turn, experience troubles, diſguſts, and anxieties here below. But theſe are paſſing clouds, which ſhade, as I may ſay, only the ſurface of their ſoul. A profound calm always reigns within; that ſerenity of conſcience, that ſimplicity of heart, that equality of mind, that lively confidence, that mild reſignation, that calm of the paſſions, that univerſal peace, which begins, even from this life, the felicity of innocent ſouls. Vain creatures, what can ye, over an heart, which you have not made, and which is not made for you? Firſt conſolation of grace, viz. peace of heart.

The ſecond is love, which mollifies to the juſt all the rigours of the law, and, according to the promiſe of Jeſus Chriſt, changes his yoke, ſo inſupportable to ſinners, into a ſweet and conſoling yoke for them. For a believing ſoul loves his God ſtill more fervently, more tenderly, and more truly, than he had ever loved the world. Every thing, therefore, even the moſt rigorous, that he undertakes for him, is either no longer a trial to his heart, or becomes its

ſweeteſt

ſweeteſt care. For the attribute of the holy love, when maſter of the heart, is either to mollify the ſufferings it occaſions, or to change them even into holy pleaſures. Thus a ſoul enamoured of God, if I may dare to ſpeak in this manner, pardons with joy, ſuffers with confidence, mortifies itſelf with pleaſure, flies from the world with delight, prays with conſolation, and fulfils every duty with an holy ſatisfaction. The more his love increaſes, the more does his yoke become eaſy. The more he loves the happier he is: for it is the height of happineſs to love what is become eſſential and neceſſary to us.

But, the ſinner, the more he loves the world the more unhappy he is: for the more he loves the world the more do his paſſions multiply, the more do his deſires inflame, the more do his ſchemes get perplexed, and the more do his anxieties become ſharpened. His love is the cauſe of all his evils: its vivacity is the ſource of all his ſufferings; becauſe the world, which is the cauſe of them, is incapable of furniſhing him with their cure. The more he loves the world the more is his pride ſtung by a preference; the more does his haughtineſs feel an injury, the more does he ſink under a diſconcerted project; the more does a diſappointed deſire afflict him, the more does an unexpected loſs weigh him down. The more he loves the world the more do pleaſures become neceſſary to him; and, as no one can fill the immenſity of his heart, the more inſupportabe does his wearineſs become: for wearineſs is the inſeparable attendant of every pleaſure; and, with all its amuſements, the world, ever ſince it was a world, complains of its laſſitude.

And think not that, to accredit virtue, I here affect to exaggerate the miſery of worldly ſouls. I know that

the world ſeems to have its happineſs; and that, amid all that whirlwind of cares, motions, fears, and anxieties, a ſmall number of fortunate individuals is ſeen, whoſe happineſs is envied, and who ſeem, in appearance, to enjoy a ſmiling and tranquil lot. But inveſtigate theſe vain outſides of happineſs and gladneſs, and you will find real ſorrows, diſtracted hearts, and agitated conſciences. Draw near to theſe men who, in your eyes, appear the happy of the earth, and you will be ſurpriſed to find them gloomy, anxious, and ſinking under the weight of a criminal conſcience. Hear them in thoſe ſerious and tranquil moments, when the paſſions, more cooled, allow ſome influence to reaſon: they all confeſs that they are any thing but happy, that the blaze of their fortune ſhines only at a diſtance, and appears worthy of envy only to thoſe who know it not. They confeſs that, amidſt all their pleaſures and proſperity, they have never been able to taſte any pure and unadulterated joy; that the world, a little ſearched into, is nothing; that they are aſtoniſhed themſelves how can it be loved when known; and that happy are they alone, here below, who can do without it and ſerve God. Some long for the opportunity of an honourable retreat; others are continually propoſing to themſelves more orderly and more Chriſtian manners. All admit the happineſs of the godly; all wiſh to become ſo; all bear teſtimony againſt themſelves. They are the forced rather than the voluntary followers of pleaſures. It is no longer inclination, it is habit, it is weakneſs which retains them in the ſhackles of the world and of ſin. They feel this; they lament it; they acknowledge it; and they give way to the current of ſo wretched a lot. Deceitful world! render happy, if in thy power, thoſe who ſerve thee, and then will I forſake the law of the Lord to attach myſelf to the vanity of thy promiſes.

You

You yourſelf, my dear hearer, ſince the many years that you ſerve the world, have you greatly forwarded your happineſs? Put in a balance on the one ſide, all the agreeable moments and days you have paſſed in it, and, on the other, all the ſorrows and vexations you have there experienced, and ſee which ſcale will preponderate. In certain moments of pleaſure, of exceſs, and of frenzy, you have, perhaps, ſaid, "It is good for us to be here;" but that was only a momentary intoxication, the illuſion of which the following moment diſcovered to you, and plunged you into all your former anxieties. Even now, when ſpeaking to you, queſtion your own heart: are you at peace within; is nothing wanting to your happineſs? Do you fear, do you wiſh for nothing? Do you never feel that God is not with you? Would you wiſh to live and die ſuch as you are? Are you ſatisfied with the world? Are you unfaithful to the Author of your being without remorſe? There are twelve hours in the day; are they all equally agreeable to you? And have you, as yet, been able to ſucceed in faſhioning a conſcience ſo as to remain tranquil in guilt?

Even then, when you have plunged to the very bottom of the ſea of iniquity to extinguiſh your remorſes, and have ſucceeded, as you thought, in ſtifling that remnant of faith which ſtill pleads in your heart for virtue, hath not the Lord commanded the ſerpent, as he ſaith in his prophet Amos, to follow and ſting you even in the abyſs where you had fled for ſhelter? And, even there, have you not felt the ſecret gnawings of the ravenous worm? Is it not true that the days you have conſecrated to God by ſome religious duty have been the happieſt of your life; and that you have never lived as I may ſay, but when your conſcience has been pure, and that you have lived with

God

God? No, ſays the prophet with an holy pride, that God whom we worſhip is not a deceitful God, nor is he, like the gods which the world worſhips, unable to reward thoſe who ſerve him: let the worldly themſelves be the judges here.

Great God! What then is man, thus to wreſtle his whole life againſt himſelf, to wiſh to be happy without thee, in ſpite of thee, in declaring himſelf againſt thee; to feel his wretchedneſs, and yet to love it; to know his true happineſs, and yet to fly from it? What is man, O my God! and who ſhall fathom his ways, and the eternal contradiction of his errors?

Would I could finiſh what I had at firſt intended, and prove to you, my brethren, that the lot of the godly is ſtill more worthy of all our wiſhes for this reaſon, that, when the internal conſolations happen even to fail them, yet they have the external aids of piety to ſtrengthen and to aſſiſt them; the ſupport of the ſacrament, which, to the reluctant ſinner, is no longer but a melancholy tribute to decency, equally tireſome and embarraſſing: the example of the holy, and the hiſtory of their wonders, from which the ſinner averts his eyes, leſt he ſee in them his own condemnation: the holy thankſgivings and prayers of the church, which, to the ſinner become a melancholy fatigue: and, laſtly, the conſolation of the divine writings, in which he no longer finds but menaces and anathemas.

What invigorating refreſhment, in effect, my brethren, to the mind of a believer, when, after quitting the vain converſations of the world, where the only ſubjects have been the exaltation of a family, the magnificence of a building, the individuals who act a brilliant part on the theatre of

of the univerſe, public calamities, the faults of thoſe at the head of affairs, the events of war, and the errors with which the government is continually accuſed; laſtly, where, earthly, they have ſpoken only of the earth; what a refreſhment after quitting theſe, when, in order to breathe a little from the fatigue of theſe vain converſations, a believing ſoul takes up the book of the law, and finds every where in it; that it matters little to man to have gained the whole world, if he thereby loſe his ſoul; that the moſt vaunted conqueſts ſhall ſink into oblivion with the vanity of the conquerors; that the heavens and the earth ſhall paſs away; that the kingdoms of the earth and all their glory ſhall waſte away like a garment; but that God alone will endure for ever; and, conſequently, that to him alone we ought to attach ourſelves! The fooliſh have repeated vain things to me, O my God! ſays then this ſoul with the prophet; but O how different from thy law!

And certainly, my brethren, what ſoothing promiſes in theſe holy books! What powerful inducements to virtue! What happy precautions againſt vice! What inſtructive events! What ſublime ideas of the greatneſs of God, and of the wretchedneſs of man! What animated paintings of the deformity of ſin, and the falſe happineſs of ſinners! We have no need of thine aſſiſtance, wrote Jonathan and all the Jewiſh people to the Spartans, for having the holy books in our hands to comfort us, we have no occaſion for the aid of men. And who, think you, my brethren, were theſe men who ſpeak in this manner? They were the unfortunate remains of Antiochus's cruelty, wandering in the mountains of Judea, deſpoiled of their property and fortunes, driven from Jeruſalem and the temple where the abomination of idols had taken place of the worſhip of the holy God; and, ſcarcely emerged from ſo afflicting a ſituation,

tion, they are in need of nothing, for they have the holy books in their hands. And, in an extremity ſo new, ſurrounded on all hands by nations of enemies, having no longer, in the midſt of their army, either the ark of Iſrael or the holy tabernacle; their tears ſtill flowing for the recent death of the invincible Judas, who was alike the ſafeguard of the people and the terror of the uncircumciſed; having ſeen their wives and children murdered before their eyes; they themſelves on the point every day of ſinking under the treachery of their falſe brethren, or the ambuſcades of their enemies; the book of the law is alone ſufficient to comfort and to defend them; and they think themſelves in a ſituation to diſclaim that aſſiſtance which an ancient treaty and alliance entitled them to demand.

I am not ſurpriſed after this, that, in the conſolation of the ſcriptures, the firſt diſciples of the goſpel ſhould forget all the rage of perſecution; and that unable to bring themſelves to loſe ſight of that divine book during life, they ſhould deſire it to be incloſed in their tomb after death, as if to guarantee to their aſhes that immortality it had always promiſed to them; and likewiſe, as it would appear, to preſent it to Jeſus Chriſt on the day of revelation, as the ſacred claim by which they were entitled to heavenly riches, and to all the promiſes made to the righteous.

Such are the conſolations of believing ſouls upon the earth. How terrible then, my brethren, to live far from God under the tyranny of ſin; always at war with one's ſelf; deſtitute of every real joy of the heart; without reliſh often for pleaſures alike as for virtue; odious to men through the meanneſs of our paſſions; inſupportable to ourſelves through the capricioufneſs of our deſires; hated of God through the horrors of our conſcience: deprived of

of the comforts of the ſacrament, ſeeing our crimes permit us not to approach it; deprived of all conſolation from the holy books, ſeeing we find in them only threatnings and anathemas; without the reſource of prayer, ſeeing the practice of it is forbidden, or, at leaſt, the habit of it loſt by a life wholly diſſolute. What then is the ſinner but the outcaſt of heaven and of the earth!

Thus, know ye, my brethren, what ſhall be the regrets of the reprobate on that great day, when to each one ſhall be rendered according to his works? You probably think that they will regret their paſt felicity, and ſhall ſay, "Our "days of proſperity have ſlipt away like a ſhadow, and "that world, in which we had ſpent ſo many ſweet mo- "ments, is now no more: the duration of our pleaſures "has been like that of a dream; our happineſs is flown, "but, alas! our puniſhments are to begin." You are miſtaken; this will not be their language. Hear how they ſpeak in the book of Wiſdom, and ſuch, as we are aſſured by the Spirit of God, they ſhall one day ſpeak, "We "never taſted pure delight in guilt; we have erred from "the ways of truth, and the Sun of righteouſneſs hath "never roſe upon us: alas! and yet that was only the be- "ginning of our misfortunes and ſufferings; we wearied "ourſelves in the way of wickedneſs and deſtruction; our "paſſions have always been a thouſand times more intol- "erable to us than could ever have been the moſt auſtere "virtues; and we have ſuffered more in working our own "deſtruction, than would have been neceſſary to ſecure "our ſalvation, and to be entitled to mount up now with "the choſen into the realms of immortality. Fools that "we are! by a ſorrowful and unhappy life to have pur- "chaſed miſeries which muſt endure for ever!"

Would

Would you then, my dear hearer, live happy on the earth; live Chriſtianly. Piety is univerſally beneficial. Innocence of heart is the ſource of true pleaſures. Turn to every ſide; there is no reſt, ſays the Spirit of God, for the wicked. Try every pleaſure; they will never eradicate that diſeaſe of the mind, that ſund of laſſitude and gloom which, go where you will, continually accompanies you. Ceaſe then to conſider the lot of the godly as a diſagreeable and ſorrowful lot; judge not of their happineſs from appearances which deceive you. You ſee their countenance bedewed with tears; but you ſee not the inviſible hand which wipes them away: you ſee their body groaning under the yoke of penitence; but you ſee not the unction of grace which mollifies it: you ſee ſorrowful and auſtere manners; but you ſee not a conſcience always cheerful and tranquil. They are like the ark in the deſart: it appeared covered only with the ſkins of animals: the exterior is mean or diſguſting; it is the condition of that melancholy deſert. But, could you penetrate into the heart, into that divine ſanctuary; what new wonders would riſe to your eyes! You would find it clothed in pure gold: you would there ſee the glory of God with which it is filled: you would there admire the fragrance of the perfumes, and the fervour of the prayers which are continually mounting upwards to the Lord; the ſacred fire which is never extinguiſhed on that altar; that ſilence, that peace, that majeſty which reigns there; and the Lord himſelf, who hath choſen it for his abode, and who hath delighted in it.

Let their lot inſpire you with an holy emulation. It depends wholly on yourſelf to be ſimilar to them. They perhaps have formerly been the accomplices of your pleaſures; why could you not become the imitator of their penitence?

penitence? Eſtabliſh, at laſt, a ſolid peace in your heart; begin to be weary of yourſelf. Hitherto you have only half-lived, for it is not living to live at enmity with one's ſelf. Return to your God who calls and who expects you: baniſh iniquity from your ſoul, and you will baniſh the ſource of all its ſorrows, you will enjoy the peace of innocence; you will live happy upon the earth; and that temporal happineſs will be only the commencement of a felicity which ſhall never fade nor be done away.

SERMON XVI.

ON THE DISPOSITIONS FOR THE COMMUNION.

LUKE iii. 4.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths ſtraight.

BEHOLD what the church is continually repeating to us during this holy time, in order to prepare us for the birth of Jeſus Chriſt: prepare, ſays ſhe to all her children, prepare the way of the Lord who deſcends from heaven to viſit and to redeem his people; make his paths ſtraight; let the hollows be filled up and the mountains levelled; let the crooked ways become ſtraight and the rugged even. Or, to expreſs the ſame meaning without metaphor; prepare yourſelves, ſays ſhe to us, to gather the fruit of that grand myſtery which we are going to celebrate, by humiliation of heart, meekneſs and charity, rectitude of intention, uniformity of living, renunciation of your own wiſdom and of your own righteouſneſs; mortifying the fleſh and humbling the ſpirit.

Allow me to hold the ſame language to you Chriſtians, my brethren, who, on this ſolemn occaſion, come to purify yourſelves in the penitential tribunals, in order to give a new birth to Jeſus Chriſt in your hearts, on receiving him

him at the ſacred table: prepare the way of the Lord. The deed you are going to perform is the moſt holy act of religion, and the ſource of the moſt ſpecial favours: undertake it not, therefore, without all the cares and all the precautions which it requires; do not expoſe yourſelves, through your own fault, to loſe the ineſtimable advantages which ought to accrue to you from it.

The communion ought to give birth to Jeſus Chriſt in our hearts; but where would be the difference between the righteous man and the ſinner, between the ſoul who diſcerns the body of the Lord, and him who treats it as a common food, were he equally to have birth in the heart of all who receive him? Deceive not yourſelves then, my brethren; there is a way of receiving Jeſus Chriſt, by which his preſence is rendered uſeleſs to us; and would to God that, in thus receiving him, we deprived ourſelves only of thoſe favours which follow an holy communion! Ah! my brethren, unleſs the communion gives birth to Jeſus Chriſt in our hearts, it brings death to him there; if it do not render us participators of his ſpirit and of his grace, it is the ſentence of our condemnation; if it be not a fruit of life to our ſoul, it is a fruit of death: terrible alternative which ought to excite our fears, but which ought not entirely to keep us away from the ſacred table. The bread which is there diſtributed is the true nouriſhment of our ſouls, the ſtrength of the ſtrong, the ſupport of the weak, the conſolation of the afflicted, the pledge of a bleſſed immortality: how dangerous would it then be to abſtain from it? But, infinitely more ſo would it be to eat it without preparation. On that account I again repeat to you, my deareſt brethren, with the church, "Prepare the way of "the Lord:" let your preparations for receiving him be of long ſtanding; baniſh from your hearts whatever may

offend him; inſtruct yourſelves in the diſpoſitions which he exacts of thoſe who receive him; uſe every effort to acquire them; there is no other mean of avoiding the riſk of an unworthy communion, and of attracting Jeſus Chriſt into your ſouls.

This is an important matter, which demands all your attention. On one ſide, there is queſtion of making you ſhun the horrible crime of profaning the body and the adorable blood of Jeſus Chriſt; on the other; of inſtructing you how to reap from the communion all the grace which it is capable of bringing forth in our hearts. What, then, are thoſe preparations ſo eſſential towards a profitable and worthy communion? I reduce them to four, which ſhall be the ſubject and the diviſion of this diſcourſe.

REFLECTION I. The euchariſt is an hidden manna; it is the food of the ſtrong, a ſenſible and permanent teſtimony of the love of Jeſus Chriſt, the continuation and the fulfilment of his ſacrifice. Now, it is neceſſary to know how to diſcern this hidden manna from common food, leſt it be taken unworthily: firſt preparation. It is the food of the ſtrong; we ought, therefore, to examine ourſelves before we venture to make uſe of it: ſecond preparation. The teſtimony of the love of Jeſus Chriſt; it can be received, therefore, only in remembrance of him, that is to ſay, in feeling arouſed in his preſence every tender and exquiſite ſenſation which can be excited by the remembrance of a dear and beloved object: third preparation. It is the fulfilment of his ſacrifice; every time, therefore, that we participate in it, we ſhew his death, and we ought to bring there a ſpirit of the croſs and of martyrdom: fourth preparation. A reſpectful faith which enables us to diſcern, a prudent faith which makes us to examine, an

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ardent faith, which enables us to love, an exalted faith which makes us to immolate; this is the ſummary of the apoſtle's doctrine, in relating to us the inſtitution of the euchariſt, and likewiſe that of all the ſaints with regard to the uſe of that adorable ſacrament.

Firſt preparation: a reſpectful faith which makes us to diſcern. Think not, my brethren, that I mean here to ſpeak of that faith which diſtinguiſhes us from unbelievers. Where is the merit of believing when the prejudices of childhood have accuſtomed reaſon to it, and when belief is, as it were, born with us? Exertion would even be neceſſary to caſt off its yoke; and, to paſs from faith to error, a greater effort is perhaps required than to return from error to the truth. I ſpeak of that lively faith which pierces through the clouds, which ſurround the throne of the Lamb; which ſees him not myſtically, and, as it were, through a glaſs, but face to face, if I may venture to ſay ſo, ſuch as he is: of that faith which, in ſpite of the veil with which the true Moſes covers himſelf on this holy mountain, fails not, however, to perceive all his glory, and to feel the inability of ſupporting his preſence: of that faith which, without raſhly examining into his majeſty, is, nevertheleſs, overpowered with its luſtre; which ſees the celeſtial legions covering themſelves with their wings, and the pillars of the firmament ſhaking before this King of terrible majeſty; of that faith to which the ſenſes could add nothing, and which is bleſſed, not becauſe it believes without ſeeing, but becauſe it almoſt ſees in believing. I ſpeak of that reſpectful faith which is ſeized with a religious trembling at the ſole preſence of the ſanctuary, which approaches the altar as Moſes did the burning buſh and the Iſraelites the thundering mountain; of that faith which feels the whole weight of God's preſence,

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and, in fear, cries out like Peter, "Depart from me, for "I am a ſinful man, O Lord." I ſpeak of that faith of which the reſpect approaches almoſt to dread, and which it is even neceſſary to comfort; which, from the fartheſt ſpot that it diſcovers Jeſus Chriſt upon the altar, feels an eclat of majeſty which ſtrikes and agitates it, and overpowers it with the dread of having ventured to come there without his order.

Behold, my brethren, what that diſcernment of faith is which the apoſtle demands of you. Great God! but doth any faith like this ſtill remain upon the earth? Ah! in vain doſt thou ſtill manifeſt thy preſence to the world; it knows thee no better than formerly: thy diſciples themſelves often know thee but according to the fleſh; and, by being conſtantly with thee, their eyes become habituated, and almoſt no longer diſcern thee. When thou ſhalt ſhew thyſelf in the heavens upon a bright cloud, men ſhall be conſumed with terror, and the impious ſhall ſeek to hide themſelves in the deepeſt caverns, and ſhall entreat the mountains to cover their heads: ah! art thou not the ſame in the ſanctuary as upon a cloud of glory? Are the heavens not opened above thee? When the prieſt pronounces the awful words, do not the heavenly ſpirits come down from heaven to officiate as thy ſervants, and to ſurround thee with their homages? Doſt thou not judge men upon that myſterious tribunal, and caſt looks of diſcernment upon that multitude of worſhippers which fills thy temples? Doſt thou not ſeparate the goats from the ſheep? Doſt thou not there pronounce ſentences of life and death? In one hand doſt thou not hold thy wrath, and in the other crowns? Doſt thou not ſeparate me there, and ſtamp, with an inviſible hand, upon my forehead the mark of my election or of my eternal reprobation? Alas! and, while thou

thou art perhaps condemning me, I have the preſumption to draw near; while thou art caſting me off from before thee, I boldly preſent myſelf there; while thou perhaps layeſt open the abyſs to mark out my place, I impudently come to take it at thy table; while thou perhaps art ranging me with the children of wrath, I come to ſeat myſelf among the children of thy love: thy body, which giveth life, to me is a body of death; the Lamb without ſtain, which breaks the ſeven ſeals of the book of death, is the laſt ſeal which fills up and cloſes that of mine iniquities; and thou, who ſhouldſt be my Saviour, becomeſt my guilt.

Ah! my brethren, God could not be ſeen in former times without inſtant death being the conſequence. A whole people of Bethſhamites was exterminated for having only too curiouſly examined the ark: the angel of the Lord covers Heliodorus with wounds, becauſe he had dared to enter into the ſanctuary of Jeruſalem: the Iſraelites in the deſert were not permitted even to approach the holy mountain from whence the Lord gave out his law; the thunders of heaven defended its acceſs: terror and death every where preceded the face of the God of Abraham. What! becauſe whirlwinds of fire no longer burſt forth to puniſh the intruders and the profaners of our ſanctuaries, reſpect and dread no longer accompany us there! Weak men, over whom the ſenſes have ſuch dominion, and who are never religious but when the God whom they worſhip is clothed in terror! For, ſay, were we to diſcern the body of the Lord; did the faith of his preſence make thoſe grand impreſſions upon us which it would undoubtedly do were we openly to ſee him; ah! would we tranquilly and almoſt unfeelingly come to ſeat ourſelves at his table? Should a few moments, employed

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in reciting, with a languid heart and an abſent mind, ſome ſlight formula, prepare us for an action ſo awful? Should a communion be the buſineſs of an idle morning perhaps gained from a cuſtomary ſlumber, or the vain cares of dreſs? Ah! the thoughts of it ſhould long previouſly occupy and affect us; time ſhould even be neceſſary to ſtrengthen us, if I may venture to ſay ſo, againſt our own feelings of reſpect, and againſt the idea of his majeſty: the days previous to this ſacred feſtival ſhould be days of retirement, of ſilence, of prayer, and of mortification: every day which brings us nearer to that bleſſed term, ſhould witneſs the increaſe of our anxieties, our fears, our joy. The thoughts of it ſhould be mingled with all our affairs, all our converſations, all our meals, all our relaxations, and even with our ſleep itſelf: our mind, filled with faith, ſhould feel its inability to pay attention to any thing elſe; we ſhould no longer perceive but Jeſus Chriſt: that image alone ſhould fix all our attention. Behold what is called to diſcern the body of the Lord.

I know that a worldly ſoul experiences inward agitations at the approach of a ſolemnity in which decency, and perhaps the law, require his preſence at the altar. But, O my God! thou who fathomeſt theſe troubled hearts, are ſuch thoſe religious terrors of faith which ſhould accompany an humble creature to thy altar? Ah! it is a ſadneſs which operates death; theſe are inquietudes which ſpring from the embarraſſments of a conſcience which requires to be cleared. They are gloomy and ſad, like the young man of the goſpel, whom thou ordereſt to follow thee: they dread theſe bleſſed days as fatal days: they look upon, as dark and gloomy myſteries, all the ſolemnities of Chriſtians: the delights of thy feaſt become a fatigue to them: they only partake of it like the blind and the lame of the goſpel:

pel: that is to ſay, that the laws of thy church muſt drag theſe faithleſs ſouls, as if by force, from the public places, from the pleaſures of the age, and from the high way of perdition, and bring them, in ſpite of themſelves, into the hall of thy feaſt: they delay, as much as poſſible, this religious duty; the ſole thought of it empoiſons all their pleaſures. Thou ſeeſt theſe unbelieving ſouls dragging on the load of a wavering conſcience; long heſitating betwixt their duties and their paſſions; ſoftening at laſt, by the choice of an indulgent confeſſor, the bitterneſs of this ſtep; appearing before thee, O God, who becomeſt their nouriſhment in this myſtery of love, with as much reluctance as if they went to face an enemy; and, perhaps, in the courſe of a whole year, experiencing no other circumſtance to grieve them than that of receiving a God who gives himſelf to them. Ah! Lord, therefore, thou inviſibly rejecteſt theſe guilty victims who oblige themſelves to be dragged by force to the altar, thou who willeſt none but voluntary ſacrifices: therefore, thou reluctantly giveſt thyſelf to theſe ungrateful hearts who unwillingly receive thee; and, wert thou ſtill capable of being troubled in the ſpirit, as thou permittedſt to be viſible over the tomb of Lazarus, ah! we ſhould once more ſee thee groaning when thou enteredſt thoſe profane mouths which, in thy ſight, are only open ſepulchres, as they have long been troubled before they could prevail upon themſelves to appear here to pay thee that homage.

Let us acknowledge then, my deareſt brethren, that the faith which makes us to diſcern the body of Jeſus Chriſt is very rare. We believe, but with a ſuperficial faith, which only ſkims the ſurface, as I may ſay, without entering into the efficacy and the myſteries of this ſacrament: we believe, but with an indolent faith, which grounds its whole

merit in ſubmitting without oppoſition: we believe, but with an inconſtant faith, which profeſſes to believe, but denies it in works: we believe, but with an human faith, which is the gift rather of our fathers according to the fleſh, than of the Father of light: we believe, but with a popular faith, which leaves us only weak and puerile ideas: we believe, but with a ſuperſtitious faith, which tends to nothing but vain and external homages: we believe, but with a faith merely of cuſtom, which feels nothing: we believe, but with an inſipid faith, which no longer diſcerns: we believe, but with a convenient faith, which is never followed with any effects: we believe, but with an ignorant faith, which fails either in reſpect through familiarity, or in love through its backwardneſs: we believe, but with a faith which enchains the mind, and leaves the heart to wander: laſtly, we believe, but with a tranquil and vulgar faith, in which there is nothing either animated, grand, ſublime, or worthy of the God which it diſcovers to us. Ah! to diſcern thy body, Lord, through faith, it is to prefer this heavenly bread to all the luxuries of Egypt; it is to render it the only conſolation of our exilement, the tendereſt ſoother of our ſufferings, the ſacred remedy of all our evils, the continual deſire of our ſouls; it is, through it, to find ſerenity under all the frowns of fortune, peace in all our troubles, and equanimity under all the ſtings of adverſity; it is to find in it an aſſylum againſt our diſgraces, a buckler to repel the flaming darts of ſatan, a renovated ardour againſt the unavoidable lukewarmneſſes of piety. To diſcern thy body, Lord, it is to devote more cares, more attention, and more circumſpection towards worthily receiving thee, than to all the other actions of life. To diſcern thy body, Lord, it is to reſpect the temples in which thou art worſhipped, the miniſters who ſerve thee, and our bodies which receive thee.

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Let every man examine himſelf, let him thereupon liſten to the teſtimony of his own conſcience; and this is the ſecond preparation, a prudent faith, which makes us to prove ourſelves: let a man examine himſelf.

REFLECTION II. I know that we are unacquainted with our own heart; that the mind of man is not always informed of what takes place in man: that the paſſions ſeduce, examples harden, and prejudices drag us away; that our inclinations are always victorious over our lights; that the heart is never in the wrong; that, to examine one's ſelf, is frequently only to harden one's ſelf in error: Such is man, O my God! delivered up to his own underſtanding: he is continually deceived, and nothing appears to his eyes but under fictitious colours: he but imperfectly knows thee; he hardly knows himſelf; he comprehends nothing in all that ſurrounds him; he takes darkneſs for light; he wanders from error to error; he quits not his errors when he returns to himſelf: the lights alone of thy faith can direct his judgments, open the eyes of his ſoul, becomes the reaſon of his heart, teach him to know himſelf, lay open the folds of ſelf-love, expoſe all the artifices of the paſſions, and exalt him to that ſpiritual man, who conceives and judges of all. By the rules of faith, then, my brethren, muſt we examine ourſelves; all human doctrines, the mollifications of cuſtom, the examples of the multitude, our own underſtanding, are all deceitful guides: if ever it was of importance not to be deceived, it ſurely is in a conjuncture where ſacrilege is the conſequence of miſtake.

But upon what ſhall we examine ourſelves? Upon what! Upon the holineſs of this ſacrament, and upon our own corruption. It is the body of Jeſus Chriſt, it is the

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the bread of angels, it is the Lamb without ſtain, who admits none around his altar but thoſe who either have not defiled their garment or who have purified them in the blood of penitence. And what art thou, forward ſoul, whom I ſee approaching with ſo much confidence? Bringeſt thou there thy modeſty, thine innocence? Haſt thou always poſſeſſed the veſſel of thy body in honour and in holineſs? Hath thy heart not been dragged through the filth of a thouſand paſſions? In the ſight of God, is not thy ſoul that blackened brand of which the prophet ſpeaks, which impure flames had blaſted and conſumed from thine earlieſt years, and which is no longer but a ſhocking veſtige of their fury? Art thou not totally covered with ſhameful wounds? Is there a ſpot upon thy body free from the mark of ſome crime? Where wilt thou place the body of the Lamb? What! it ſhall reſt upon thy tongue; that pure and immaculate body upon a tomb which hath never exhaled but infection and ſtench; that body immolated with ſo much gentleneſs upon the inſtrument of all thy vengeances and bitterneſs; that crucified body on the ſeat of all thy ſenſualities and debauches. What! he ſhall deſcend to thy heart? But will he therein find where to repoſe his head? Haſt thou not changed that holy temple into a den of thieves? What! thou art going to place him among ſo many impure pleaſures, profane attachments, ambitious projects, emotions of hatred, of jealouſy, and of pride; it is amidſt all theſe monſters that thou haſt prepared his dwelling-place? Ah! thou delivereſt him up to his enemies, thou once more putteſt him into the hands of his executioners.

You have examined yourſelves, ſay you to me. Before drawing near you have made your confeſſion. Ah! my brethren, and, with the ſame mouth from which you have

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ſo lately vented all your iniquities, you go to receive Jeſus Chriſt? And, the heart ſtill reeking with a thouſand ill-extinguiſhed paſſions, and which to-morrow ſhall ſee in all their wonted vigour, you dare to approach the altar with your preſent, and to participate in the holy myſteries? And, the imagination ſtill ſtained with the ideas of thoſe recent exceſſes which you have juſt been recounting to the prieſt, you go to eat of the pure bread of the choſen? What! on your departure from the tribunal the communion, in your eyes, ſupplies the place, and anſwers the purpoſes of penitence? From guilt you ruſh headlong to the altar? In place of diſſolving in tears with the penitent, you come to rejoice with the righteous? In place of nouriſhing yourſelf with the bread of tribulation, you run to a delicious feaſt? In place of lingering at the gate of the temple, like the publican, you confidently draw near to the holy of holies? In former times, a penitent came not to the table of the Lord but after whole years of humiliation, of abſtinence, of prayer, and of auſterity, and they purified themſelves in tears, in grief, and in the public exerciſes of a painful diſcipline: they became new men; an heart-felt regret was the only veſtige of their former life: no traces of their paſt crimes were to be recogniſed but in the grace of penitence, and of the macerations which, at laſt, had expiated them; and the euchariſt was that heavenly bread which no man, a ſinner, then eat but with the ſweat of his brow. And, at preſent, to have confeſſed crimes is believed to have already puniſhed them; that an abſolution, which is only given under the ſuppoſition of an humbled and contrite heart, actually creates, and renders it ſo; that all the purity required of thoſe who receive the body of Jeſus Chriſt, is, that they have laid open all the virulence and infection of their ſores. Unworthy communions, my brethren; you eat and you drink

drink your damnation: in vain may we comfort you; can man juſtify when God condemns?

Beſides, it is pure and without leaven; it requires to be exempted from leaven to eat of it: now, candidly, have thoſe worldly perſons, whom the circumſtances of a ſolemnity determine to approach the holy table, quitted the old leaven in preſenting themſelves at the altar? Do they not bring along with them every paſſion ſtill living in its roots? Judge thereof from the conſequences. On their departure from thence they find themſelves exactly the ſame; hatreds are not extinguiſhed, the empire of voluptuouſneſs is not weakened, animation in the purſuit of pleaſures is not blunted, inclination for the world is not leſs violent; in a word, cupidity has loſt nothing of its rights. We ſee no greater precautions than before againſt dangers already encountered: the ſociety of the world again reſumes its influence; converſations are renewed; the paſſions awaken; every thing reſumes its former train, and, in addition to their former ſtate, they have now to add the profanation of this awful myſtery. How is this? It is that a ſimple confeſſion is no examination of one's ſelf.

Again, it is the food of the ſtrong. A weak, ſickly, and wavering ſoul, who turns with every wind; who gives way to the firſt obſtacle; who founders upon the firſt rock; who eſcapes every moment from the guidance of grace; who has a long experience of his own fragility; who never brings to the altar but promiſes an hundred times violated, but momentary ſenſations of devotion, which the very firſt pleaſure ſtifles; who, from his earlieſt years, has been in the alternate practice of weakneſſes and holy things, and who has ſeen a conſtant ſucceſſion of crimes to repentance, and of the ſacrament to relapſes: is a ſoul of this deſcription

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tion a ſtrong ſoul? Is it not its duty to examine itſelf, to increaſe, to ſtrengthen, and to exerciſe itſelf in charity? Scarcely in a ſtate to digeſt milk, ought it to load itſelf with ſolid food, and ſuch as can ſerve the purpoſes of nouriſhment only to the perfect man?

It is written in the law that, if the ſin-offering be placed in an earthen veſſel, the veſſel ſhall immediately be broken; but, if in a brazen veſſel, it ſhall be both ſcoured and rinſed in water. Would theſe circumſtances, ſo carefully and minutely marked, be worthy of the holy Spirit, did they not contain inſtructions and myſteries? Doth not a weak ſoul, who receives the true victim, reſemble that earthen veſſel which falls in piece,s as I may ſay, being unable to endure the violence of this ſacred fire? On the contrary, the firm ſoul, like the braſs, is purified, loſes in it all its ſtains, and comes out from it more beautiful and brilliant than before. What is the conſequence, according to Jeſus Chriſt, of putting new wine into old bottles; do they not burſt, and allow the wine to be loſt upon the ground? What is the application of this parable? You put the myſtical wine, that wine whoſe ſtrength operates an holy intoxication in pure ſouls, into a decayed and worn-out heart, which long-eſtabliſhed paſſions have almoſt conſumed. Ah! I am not ſurpriſed that it is unable to endure its ſtrength, that the blood of Jeſus Chriſt cannot tarry there, and that, on the firſt occaſion, you ſhed and trample it under foot; it required to have gradually accuſtomed your heart to it, to have prepared it by retirement, by prayer, by daily conqueſts over yourſelf; and, through the means of theſe continued and ſalutary trials to have ſtrengthened and rendered it capable of receiving Jeſus Chriſt.

It is the paſſover of Chriſtians: now, Jeſus Chriſt celebrates his paſſover with his diſciples alone.

Now, what is it to be his diſciples? It is to renounce one's ſelf, to carry his croſs, to follow him. Are you mortified in your deſires, patient under your afflictions? Do you walk in the ways in which Jeſus Chriſt hath walked before you? To be his diſciples is mutually to love each other; and how often have you come to eat of this bread of union, how often have you made your appearance at this banquet of charity, your heart inwardly loaded with gall and bitterneſs againſt your brother? How often have you come to offer up your preſent at the altar without having reconciled yourſelf with him?

Laſtly, It is a God ſo pure, that the ſtars are dimmed in his preſence; ſo holy, that, after the fall of the angel, heaven was rent and the abyſs opened that he might place an eternal chaos between ſin and him; ſo jealous, that a ſingle wandering deſire injures and offends him. Thus, my brethren, it is neceſſary that you examine yourſelves upon your own inclinations: are not thoſe deſires of the age, of which the apoſtle ſpeaks, ſtill nouriſhed within you? Render glory to God, and, in his preſence, ſearch your hearts to the bottom. I go to eat of the body of Jeſus Chriſt, and to convert it into my own ſubſtance; but, when he ſhall have entered into my ſoul, he who knows and diſcerns its intentions and moſt ſecret inclinations, will he find nothing there unworthy of the ſanctity of his preſence? He will immediately proceed to the ſpring and to the cauſes of my wanderings; he will examine whether their ſource be dried up, or their courſe only ſuſpended; he will perceive what are ſtill the dominant inclinations of my ſoul, and what is the weight which ſtill turns the balance

ance of my heart: Alas! will he be enabled to ſay, as formerly when entering into the houſe of Zaccheus, "This "day is ſalvation come to this houſe?" Have I ſincerely caſt off that paſſion ſo fatal to my innocence: that bitterneſs of heart of which I have ſo lately expreſſed my deteſtation at the feet of the prieſt; that idoliſing of riches which leads me to graſp at even iniquitous profits; that madneſs of gaming by which my health, my affairs, and my ſalvation are injured; that vexatious and variable temper which the ſlighteſt contradiction inflames; that vanity which leads me to ſoar above the rank in which my anceſtors had left me; that envy which, with malignant eyes, has always viewed the reputation and the proſperity of my equals; that proud and cenſorious air which judges upon all, and never judges itſelf; that ſupreme influence over me of effeminacy and voluptuouſneſs, which are, as it were, interwoven with the foundation and principle of my being? Has the avowal, which I come from making, of my weakneſſes, to the miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt, rooted them out from my heart? Am I a new creature? He alone who is regenerated can aſpire to this heavenly bread which I am going to eat: in thine eyes am I ſo, O my God? Do I not bear the name of living, though ſtill, in effect, dead? Will the Mighty, entering into my ſoul, poſſeſs it in peace, and will he not find there ſeven unclean ſpirits who ſhall chaſe him from it? Inſtruct me, Lord and ſuffer not that thy Chriſt, that thy holy deſcend into corruption. Such, my brethren, is the way to examine ourſelves. The Lord had formerly forbidden the Jews to offer up honey and leaven in the ſacrifices: ſee if, in approaching the altar, you bring not with you the leaven of your crimes, and the honey of voluptuouſneſs: that is to ſay, both that reliſh for the world and for pleaſure, and that effeminate and ſenſual character, enemy of the croſs, and incompatible with

ſalvation. Approach not, if you do not feel yourſelf ſufficiently pure: this holy body, ſays the prophet would not purge your iniquity, it would only increaſe it; your religion would be vain, your heart idolatrous, your ſacrifice a ſacrilege.

Examine, therefore, yourſelf, and afterwards eat of the heavenly bread. But we are not to ſtop at the ſimple diſcerning and examining. Hitherto you have only removed the obſtacles; but you have not ſettled the laſt preparations: you have lopt off whatever might repel Jeſus Chriſt from your ſoul; but you have not acquired what might attract him to it: you have arranged ſo as not to receive him unworthily; but you have not ſo as to receive him with fruit: it is not ſufficient to be free from guilt; it is neceſſary to be clothed with righteouſneſs and ſanctity: it is little not to betray him like Judas; it is neceſſary to love him with the other diſciples: it is little, in a word, to be no longer profane, worldly, voluptuous, effeminate, proud, and revengeful; it is neceſſary to be ſedate, meek, humble, firm, chaſte, believing, Chriſtian. "As oft as you "do this, do it in remembrance of me:" this is the third diſpoſition to communicate in remembrance of Jeſus Chriſt.

REFLECTION III. What is it to communicate in remembrance of Jeſus Chriſt? It is, in the *firſt* place, internally to deſcribe all that paſſed in the heart of Jeſus Chriſt in inſtituting this adorable ſacrament. "With deſire," ſaid he to his diſciples, "I have deſired to eat this paſſover with "you before I ſuffer." He ſighed for that bleſſed moment; he never loſt ſight of it; in the remembrance of it he was comforted for all the bitterneſs of his paſſion. What did he thereby mean to teach us? Ah! that we ought to bring to this divine table an heart enflamed, penetrated, conſumed;

ed; an eager, earneſt, and impatient heart; an hunger and a thirſt after Jeſus Chriſt; an inclination rouſed by love: in a word, what I have termed a burning deſire which impels us to love. This bread, ſaid a father, requires a famiſhed heart. Ah! Lord, ſays then the believing ſoul with St. Auguſtin, who will give me that thou mayeſt enter into my heart to take poſſeſſion of it; wholly to fill it; to reign there alone; to dwell there with me even to the conſummation of ages; to be mine all; there to conſtitute my pureſt delights; to ſhed through it a thouſand inward conſolations; to ſatiate, to gladden it, to make me forget my miſeries, mine anxieties, my vain pleaſures, all mankind, the whole univerſe, and to leave me wholly to thee, to enjoy thy preſence, thy converſation, and all the delights which thou prepareſt for thoſe who love thee? Perhaps, Lord, the tenement of my ſoul is not yet ſufficiently embelliſhed to receive thee; but come and be thyſelf all its ornament. Perhaps thou perceiveſt ſtains which repel thee from it; but thy divine touch will purify them all. Perhaps thou diſcovereſt inviſible enemies ſtill there; but art not thou the mighty? Thy ſole preſence will diſperſe them, and peace will reign there when once thou ſhalt be in poſſeſſion of it. Perhaps it has wrinkles which render it forbidding; but thou wilt renew its youth like that of the eagle. Perhaps it is ſtill ſtained with the blemiſhes of its former infidelities; but thy blood will waſh them entirely out. Come, Lord, and tarry not; every bleſſing will attend me with thee; deſpiſed, perſecuted, afflicted, deſpoiled, calumniated, I will conſider as nothing my ſorrows from the moment that thou ſhalt come to alleviate them: honoured, favoured, exalted, ſurrounded with abundance, theſe vain proſperities will ceaſe to intereſt me, will appear as nothing from the moment thou ſhalt have made

made me to taſte how ſweet thou art. Such are the deſires which ought to lead us to the altar.

But, alas! many bring there only a criminal diſguſt and repugnance: occaſions are required to induce them to determine upon it; of themſelves they would never have thought of it. But, what do I ſay, occaſions? Thunders and anathemas are required. Good God! that the church ſhould be reduced, through the lukewarmneſs of Chriſtians, to make a law to them of participating in thy body and in thy blood! That penalties and threatenings ſhould be required to lead them to thy altar, and to oblige them to ſeat themſelves at thy table! That the Chriſtian's only felicity upon earth ſhould be a painful precept to him! That the moſt glorious privilege with which men can be favoured by thee ſhould be an irkſome reſtraint to them! Others approach it with an heavy heart, a pallid appetite, a ſoul wholly of ice: people who live in the commerce of pleaſures and of the ſacrament; who participate at the table of Satan and at that of Jeſus Chriſt; who have ſtated days for the Lord and days allotted for the age: people to whom a communion coſts only a day of reſtraint and reſervation; who, on that day, neither gamble, ſhew themſelves, ſee company, nor ſpeak evil. But this exertion goes no further; all devotion ceaſes with the ſolemnity; it is a deed of ceremony; after this ſhort ſuſpenſion they are at eaſe with themſelves; they tranquilly return to their former ways; for that was a point agreed upon with themſelves; they ſmoothly continue to live in this mixture of holy and of profane: the ſacrament calms us upon pleaſures; pleaſures to be more tranquil on the ſide of the conſcience lead us to the ſacrament; and they are almoſt good in order to be worldly without ſcruple. Thus they bring to the altar a

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taſte cloyed with the amuſements and the delights of the age, with the embarraſſments of affairs, with the tumult of the paſſions: they feel not the ineffable ſweets of this heavenly food; they retrace, even at the foot of the throne of grace, the images of thoſe pleaſures they have ſo lately left: intereſts which occupy us, projects which puzzle us, ideas which force us from the altar to drag us back to the world, make much deeper impreſſions upon the heart than the preſence of Jeſus Chriſt. But is it not, Lord, againſt thoſe monſters of Chriſtians that thy prophet, incenſed, formerly ſaid to thee, "Ah Lord, let thy table become a ſnare be-"fore them; and that which ſhould have been for their "welfare let it become a trap."

In the ſecond place to communicate in remembrance of Jeſus Chriſt, is to wiſh to awaken, through the preſence of this ſacred pledge, every impreſſion which his memory can make upon an heart which loves him. The firmeſt bonds are looſened by abſence: Jeſus Chriſt well foreſaw that, aſcending up to heaven, his diſciples would inſenſibly forget this kindneſſes and his divine inſtructions. Alas! Moſes remains only forty days upon the mountain, and already the Iſraelites ceaſe to remember the miracles that he had wrought to deliver them from Egypt. We wot not, ſaid they among themſelves, what is become of this Moſes, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt; let us make gods who ſhall go before and defend us againſt our enemies. Jeſus Chriſt to guard againſt theſe inconſtancies of the human heart, wiſhed, in aſcending to the heavenly Sion, to leave us a pledge of his preſence: it is there that he wiſhes we ſhould come to conſole ourſelves for his ſenſible abſence; it is there that we ought to find a more lively remembrance of his wonders, of his doctrine, of his kindneſſes, or his divine perſon; it is there that, under myſteri-

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ous ſigns, we come to ſee him born at Bethlehem, brought up at Nazareth, holding diſcourſe with men, and traverſing the cities of Judea, working ſigns and miracles which no one before him had ever done, calling as followers rude diſciples, in order to make them maſters of the world, confounding the hypocriſy of the Phariſees, announcing ſalvation to men, leaving marks every where of his power and goodneſs, entering in triumph into Jeruſalem, led to mount Calvary, expiring upon a croſs, conqueror of death and of hell, leading with him into heaven thoſe who were captives as the trophies of his victory, and forming afterwards his church with the overflowing of his Spirit and the abundance of his gifts; in a word, we ſhall there find him in all his myſteries.

You envy, ſaid St. Chryſoſtom, the lot of a woman who touches his garments, of a ſinful one who bathes his feet with her tears, of the women of Galilee who had the happineſs to follow and to ſerve him in the courſe of his miniſtry, of his diſciples with whom he familiarly converſed of, the people of thoſe times who liſtened to words of the grace and of ſalvation which proceeded from his mouth; you call bleſſed thoſe who ſaw him; many prophets and kings have vainly wiſhed it; but you, my brethren, come to the altars and you ſhall ſee him; you ſhall touch him; you ſhall give him an holy kiſs, you ſhall bathe him with your tears, and your bowels ſhall bear him even like thoſe of Mary. Alas! our fathers went into the holy land to worſhip the traces of his feet, and the places that he had conſecrated with his preſence. Here, they were told, he propoſed the parable of the good ſhepherd and the loſt ſheep; here he reconciled an adultreſs; here he comforted a ſinful woman; here he ſanctified the marriage and the feaſt with his preſence; here he multiplied the loaves to fill a famiſhed multitude; here

here he checked his diſciples who wanted to bring fire from heaven upon a criminal city; here he deigned to hold converſe with a woman of Samaria; here he ſuffered the children around him, and rebuked thoſe who wanted to drive them away; here he reſtored ſight to the blind, made the lame to walk, delivered thoſe poſſeſſed with devils, made the dumb to ſpeak, and the deaf to hear. At theſe words our fathers felt themſelves tranſported with an holy joy; they ſhed tears of tenderneſs and of religion upon that bleſſed land; this ſight, theſe images, carried them back to the times, to the actions, to the myſteries of Jeſus Chriſt, inſpired them with freſh ardour, and conſoled their faith; ſinners found there a ſweet truſt, the weak a new force, and the righteous new deſires.

Ah! Chriſtians; no, it is not neceſſary to croſs the ſeas; ſalvation is at your hand; the word which we preach to you will be, if you wiſh it, upon your mouth and in your heart: open the eyes of faith, behold theſe altars; they are not places conſecrated formerly with the preſence, it is Jeſus Chriſt himſelf: approach in remembrance of him; come to rekindle all that your heart hath ever felt of tender, affecting, and lively, for this divine Saviour. Let the remembrance of his meekneſs, which would not permit him to break the reed already bruiſed, nor to extinguiſh the yet glimmering lamp, quiet your tranſports and your impatiencies: let the remembrance of his toils and of his troubleſome life overwhelm you for your effeminacy: let the remembrance of his modeſty and of his humility, which made him fly when they wanted to make him king, cure you of your vanities, of your ſchemes, of your frivolous pretenſions: let the remembrance of his faſt for forty days reproach you for your ſenſualities: let the remembrance of his zeal againſt the profaners of the

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temple teach you with what reſpect, and with what holy dread you ought to enter there: let the remembrance of the ſimplicity and the frugality of his manners condemn the vain ſuperfluities and the exceſſes of yours: let the remembrance of his retirement and of his prayers warn you to fly the world, to retire ſometimes into the ſecrecy of your houſe, to paſs, at leaſt, ſome portion of the day in the indiſpenſible practice of prayer: let the remembrance of his tender compaſſion for a famiſhed people give you bowels of commiſeration for the unfortunate: let the remembrance of his holy diſcourſes teach you to converſe innocently, holily, and profitably with men: in a word, let the remembrance of all his virtues, there more lively, more preſent to the heart and to the mind, correct you of all your weakneſſes: this is what is called to communicate in remembrance of him.

But, to bring continually to the altar the ſame weakneſſes; to familiariſe ourſelves in ſuch a manner with the body of Jeſus Chriſt, that it no longer awakens in us a new ſentiment, but leaves us always ſuch as we are; to nouriſh ourſelves with a divine food, yet not to increaſe; frequently to approach this burning furnace without any additional heat to your lukewarmneſs; to appear there with faults an hundred times deteſted yet ſtill dear, with habits of imperfection, which, though light in themſelves, are no longer ſo, however, through the attachment and the bent which render them inevitable to us, and through the circumſtance of the ſacrament which there is the riſk of profaning; to make profeſſion of piety, of eſtrangement from the world, to be almoſt every day in the commerce of holy things, and to have determined, as it were, upon a limited point of virtue beyond which never to riſe, and, after ten years exerciſe of piety, to be no farther advanced than

than at firſt, on the contrary, to have rather relaxed from the firſt fervour; to be continually applying to this divine remedy, yet to feel no alteration for the better in the diſeaſe; to heap ſacrament upon ſacrament, if I may dare to ſay ſo, yet never to empty the heart in order to make room for this heavenly food; to nouriſh envies, animoſities, ſecret attachments, a fund of ſenſuality, of vain deſires to pleaſe, to be courted, to be proſperous; to permit, in converſation, the habit of witticiſms and every freedom of ſpeech upon others, of endleſs nothings, of ſentiments wholly profane, of quibbles which wound ſincerity, of concealments by which falſehood becomes familiar, of haſtineſſes and burſts of paſſion; to be jealous to an extreme wherever ſelf is concerned; to riſe indignant at the ſmalleſt appearance of neglect, and to be incapable of digeſting a ſingle diſobliging geſture; and yet, with all this, to feed upon the bread of angels; O my God! how much leſs than this ought to make us tremble!

But, is it to eat of this bread unworthily, to eat it with ſo many imperfections and weakneſſes? Who knows this, O Lord, but thee? All that we know is, that it is not communicating in remembrance of thee; that many righteouſneſſes ſhall appear in thy ſight, at the great day, as a ſoiled cloth; that many, who had even propheſied in thy name, ſhall be rejected; and that every thing is to be dreaded in this ſtate. Peter is not admitted to thy ſupper till after thou hadſt waſhed his feet; nevertheleſs, thou aſſureſt us that he was altogether pure. Magdalene is ſent away, and thou ſayeſt unto her, "Woman touch me not," becauſe a too ſenſible affection was the cauſe of her eagerneſs; and, nevertheleſs, her love had been great, and ſhe had waſhed thy ſacred feet and her own ſins with her tears. And we, Lord, full of wants, empty of ſincere fruits of penitence, made up wholly of effeminacy and ſenſualities,

lukewarm and without deſire, fixed in a certain ſtate of languiſhing and imperfect piety, more ſuſtained by habitude and the engagements of an holy profeſſion than by thy grace, or by a lively and ſolid faith, alas! we make thy body our ordinary food. What inexplicable gulphs, Lord! What a train of crimes, perhaps, not known, unrepented of, multiplied to infinity, and which are as the ſhoot upon which a thouſand new profanations are afterwards grafted! What gulphs, once more! And what terrible ſecrets ſhall thy light make manifeſt to us at the great day! In thy ſight, O my God, what am I! I can neither offend nor pleaſe thee by halves; my condition admits not of thoſe middle ſtates of virtue which hold, as it were, a mid way betwixt innocence and guilt; if not a ſaint, I am a monſter; if not a veſſel of honour, I am a veſſel of ſhame; if not an angel of light, there is no room to heſitate, I am an angel of darkneſs: and, if not a living temple of thy ſpirit, I muſt be its profaner. Good God! what powerful motives for vigilance, for ſelf-examination, for circumſpection, for approaching thine altars with trembling; for humility, tears, and compunction, while waiting the manifeſtation of thine adorable judgments! But ſtill, my brethren, it is not enough to communicate in remembrance of Jeſus Chriſt; and, in order to retrace his life, it is likewiſe neceſſary, and this is the laſt diſpoſition, to renew the remembrance of his death, and to ſhew him whenever we eat of his body and drink of his blood; and this is what I call a noble faith which leads us to ſacrifice.

REFLECTION IV. As oft as you ſhall eat of the body and drink of the blood of the Lord, you will ſhew his death until the kingdom of God ſhall come. How this? Literally ſpeaking his death is ſhewn, becauſe this myſtery was a prelude to his paſſion; becauſe Judas there determined to betray him; becauſe Jeſus Chriſt, eager to undergo

undergo that baptiſm of blood with which he was to be baptiſed, anticipated its fulfilment, and ſacrificed himſelf beforehand by the myſtical ſeparation of his body and of his blood; becauſe the euchariſt is the permanent ſacrifice of the church, the fruit and the fulneſs of that of the croſs: laſtly, becauſe Jeſus Chriſt is there as in a ſtate of death; he hath a mouth and ſpeaks not; eyes and uſes them not; feet and walks not. But, my brethren, in that ſenſe the impious, equally as the juſt man, ſhews the death of the Lord as oft as he eats of his body: it is a myſtery, and not a merit; it is the nature of the ſacrament, and not the privilege of him who receives it; it is a conſequence of its inſtitution and not a diſpoſition for approaching it. Now, the deſign of the apoſtle here, is to prevent the abuſes, to inſtruct believers how to eat worthily of the body of the Lord, to explain to them, in the myſteries contained in this ſacrament, the diſpoſitions which it requires. There is a way, therefore, of ſhewing the death of the Lord, which ſhould be wholly in our hearts, which diſpoſes and prepares us, which fits the ſituation of our ſoul to the nature of this myſtery, which makes us to bear upon our body the mortification of Jeſus Chriſt, which immolates and crucifies us with him. Let us reſume the reaſons we have touched upon, and change the letter into ſpirit.

aſtly, The death of the Lord is ſhewn, becauſe this myſtery was a prelude to his paſſion. In former times the euchariſt was a prelude to martyrdom. From the moment that the rage of the tyrant was declared, and the perſecution begun, all the believers run to provide themſelves with this bread of life; they carried this precious truſt into their houſes: death ſeemed leſs terrible to them when they had before their eyes the beloved pledge of their immortality: they even deſired it; and the ineffable conſolations

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which the preſence of Jeſus Chriſt, hidden under myſtical veils, already ſhed through their ſoul, made them to long for that torrent of delight with which he will overflow his choſen when they ſhall behold him face to face. Were they dragged to priſon, and, like felons, loaded with irons, they of whom the world was unworthy; they careſully concealed the divine euchariſt in their boſom; they feaſted upon it in the hopes of martyrdom; they grew fat upon this heavenly food like pure victims, that their ſacrifice might be more pleaſing to the Lord. Chaſte virgins, fervent believers, holy miniſters, partook altogether of the bleſſed bread: and what delight even in their chains! What ſerenity of mind in theſe dark and gloomy abodes! What ſongs of thankſgiving in theſe horrible places where the eye encountered nothing but the ſad images of death, and preparations for the moſt cruel tortures! How often did they ſay to Jeſus Chriſt, preſent with them in this adorable ſacrament: Ah! we fear no ill, Lord, ſince thou art with us: though hoſts ſurround us yet will we not be afraid; our enemies may deſtroy our bodies, but thou wilt reſtore them to us glorious and immortal; for who can deſtroy thoſe whom the Father hath beſtowed upon thee? Bleſſed chains which thou deigneſt to ſuſtain! Holy priſons which thou conſecrateſt with thy preſence! Beloved dungeons in which thou filleſt our ſouls with ſo many lights! Precious death which is to unite us with thee, and to withdraw the veil which conceals thee from our ſight! Thence what fortitude under their tortures! Filled with the body of Jeſus Chriſt, waſhed in his blood, they quitted their priſons, ſays an holy father, like lions out of their den ſtill raging and thirſting for death and carnage; they flew upon the ſcaffolds, and, with an holy pride, launched here and there looks of confidence and magnanimity which appalled the moſt ferocious tyrants, and even diſarmed their executioners: they ſhewed then the

the death of the Lord in preparing themſelves for martyrdom by the communion.

The tranquillity of our ages, and the religion of the Ceſars leave us no longer the ſame hope; death is no longer the reward of faith, and the euchariſt makes no more martyrs: but have we not domeſtic perſecutors? Has our faith only tyrants to dread? And is there not a martyrdom of love, as well as of blood? In approaching the altars then, my brethren, a believing ſoul ſighs for the diſſolution of his mortal body; for, could he love this life, and ſhew the death of Jeſus Chriſt, and renew, in theſe myſtical ſigns, his quitting the world to go to his Father? He complains of the length of his exilement; he bears, to the foot of the ſanctuary, a ſpirit of death and of martyrdom: "Ah! "Lord, ſince thou art dead and crucified to the world, "why detain me there? What can I find upon the earth "worthy of my heart, ſeeing thou art no longer there? The "myſtery itſelf, which ſhould conſole me through thy pre- "ſence, recals to me thy death: theſe covers which veil "thee are an artifice of thy love; and thou half concealeſt "thyſelf only to inſpire my heart with the deſire of fully "beholding thee. Vain things, what offer ye to me but "an empty ſhadow of the God whom I ſeek? What an- "ſwer do ye make when my ſoftened heart bends towards "you to ſoothe its anxieties? Return, ſay you, to him "who hath made us; we groan in awaiting his coming to "deliver us from this ſervitude, which makes us ſubſervi- "ent to the paſſions and to the errors of men: ſeek him "not among us, thou wilt not find him, he is riſen, he is "no longer here; if he appear it is only to die again; re- "cal the deſires and the affections which thou meant to "place upon us, and turn them towards heaven; the "bridegroom hath been carried away, the earth is no "longer for a Chriſtian now but a vale of mourning and

"teas:

" tears: ſuch is what they anſwer to me. What then de-
" tains me here, Lord? What are the ties and the charms
" which can attach me to the world? Reſtleſs in pleaſures,
" impatience in abſence, tired of the converſations and the
" commerce of men, afraid of ſolitude; without reliſh
" for the world, without reliſh for virtue; doing the evil
" I would not, and leaving undone the good that I would;
" what keeps me here? What delays the diſſolution of
" this body of ſin? What prevents me from ſoaring with
" the wings of the dove upon the holy mountain? I feel
" that I ſhould then be happy; I could then feaſt at all
" times upon this delicious bread: I taſte no real delight
" but at the feet of thy altars, theſe are, indeed, the hap-
" pieſt moments of my life: but they are ſo ſhort, and I
" muſt ſo ſoon return to the inſipidities and to the diſguſts
" of the world; I am under the neceſſity of being ſo long
" abſent from thee: no, Lord, there is no perfect happi-
" neſs on the earth, and death is a gain to whoever knows
" to love thee."

Are theſe our ſentiments, my brethren, when we draw near to the altars? Where are now the Chriſtians who, like the firſt believers, await the bleſſed hope, and haſten, by their ſighs, the end of their baniſhment, and the coming of Jeſus Chriſt? This is a refinement of piety of which they have no idea; it is merely a language of the ſpeculiſt; it is, however, the ground-work of religion, and the firſt ſtep of faith. The neceſſity of dying is conſidered as a cruel puniſhment; the ſole idea of death, with which our fathers were ſo comforted, makes us to ſhudder; the end of life is the term of our pleaſures in place of being that of our ſufferings; the attentions paid to the body are endleſs; our precautions extend even to abſurdity, or, if it ſometimes happen that this laſt moment is deſired, it is in conſequence of being wearied of life and of its chagrins;

it

it is a diſgrace, an habitual infirmity preying upon us, a revolution in our worldly matters which leaves no more pleaſures to be expected here below, the diſappointment of an eſtabliſhment, a death, an accident, or laſtly, a diſguſt and a wiſh of ſelf-love; we tire of being unfortunate, but we are not eager to go to be reunited with Jeſus Chriſt: and, with all this, they come to eat of the Lord's ſupper, to renew the remembrance of his paſſion, and to ſhew his death until he ſhall come; what an outrage!

2*dly*, His death is ſhewn in this myſtery, becauſe Judas there finally determined upon delivering him up. Now, what does this remembrance exact of us? Ah! my brethren, an ardent deſire of repairing, by our homages, the impiety of ſo many ſhocking communions which crucify Jeſus Chriſt afreſh. So many impure, revengeful, worldly, and extortioning ſinners, of every people and of every nation, receive him into profane mouths: we ought to feel the inſults which Jeſus Chriſt thereby ſuffers; to humble ourſelves before him, ſeeing that his moſt ſignal bleſſing is become the occaſion of the greateſt crimes; to tremble for ourſelves; to admire his goodneſs, which, for the profit of a ſmall number of choſen, hath graciouſly been willing to ſubmit to the indignities of that endleſs multitude of ſinners, of all ages and of all times, who have, and ſtill continue to diſhonour him; to avert, by the tears of our heart and a thouſand inward lamentations, the ſcourges which unworthy communions never fail to draw down upon the earth. For, if the apoſtle formerly lamented that general plagues, epidemical diſeaſes, and ſudden deaths were only a conſequence of the profanation of the ſacrament; ah! thy finger has long been upon us, Lord; the cup of thy wrath is poured out upon our cities and provinces; thou armeſt kings againſt kings, and nations againſt nations: nothing is now ſpoken of but battles and the

rumours

rumours of war; our fields are ſtricken with ſterility; our families are conſumed by the ſword of the enemy, and the father is deprived of the only prop and conſolation of his old age; we groan under burdens, which, though keeping the enemy of the ſtate from our walls, yet leave us a prey to famine and want; the arts are now almoſt of no avail to the people; commerce languiſhes, and induſtry can hardly ſupply the common neceſſaries of life; yet what are even the public calamities, when compared with the private miſeries known to thee alone? We have ſeen our citizens mowed down by hunger and death, and our cities turned into frightful deſerts; the enemy of thy name takes advantage of our diſſentions, and uſurps thine inheritance.

Whence proceed theſe ſcourges, great God! ſo continued and ſo terrible? Where are formed thoſe clouds of wrath and indignation which have ſo long been pouring out their torrents upon us? Is it not to puniſh the ſacrilegious that thou art armed? Do not the outrages which are every day committed againſt thy body, at the feet of the altars, draw down upon us theſe marks of thy wrath? O ſtrike us then, Lord, and avenge thy glory; ſtop not the arm of thy angel who hovers over us; let the houſes where the traces of a profane blood are ſtill imprinted not be ſpared; thine anger is juſt. But no, give us not the water of gall to drink becauſe we have ſinned againſt thee; give peace in our days; liſten to the cries of the righteous who entreat it of thee: "Lord," ſay they with the prophet, "we look-"ed for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, "and behold trouble." Terminate the profanations which are ever the attendants of wars; ceaſe to puniſh ſacrileges by multiplying them on the earth; once more reſtore majeſty to ſo many temples profaned, worſhip and dignity to ſo many churches deſpoiled, peace to our cities, abundance to our families, conſolation and gladneſs of heart to Iſrael; let

let the child be reſtored to his father, and the huſband to the deſolate wife; and, if our evils touch thee not, O pay attention to the miſeries of thy church.

3*dly*, The death of the Lord is ſhewn in this myſtery, for Jeſus Chriſt ſacrifices himſelf in it, by the myſtical ſeparation of his body and of his blood. What follows from thence? That we muſt be at the foot of the altar as if we were at the foot of the croſs: that we muſt enter into the diſpoſitions of the diſciples and of the women of Jeruſalem who received the dying ſigh of Jeſus, and were preſent at the conſummation of his ſacrifice. Now, what hatred had they not againſt a world which had crucified their Maſter? What meaſures did they think it neceſſary to keep with his murderers? Were they afraid of declaring themſelves the diſciples of him who had ſo openly declared himſelf their Saviour, and that at the price of his blood? Did they not ſay to the heavenly Father, Ah! ſtrike us, Lord, who are the guilty, and ſpare the innocent. What horror at their paſt faults, which had attached ſo good a Maſter to the croſs! What a lively impreſſion in their heart of his ſufferings! Thus, my brethren, ſtill to keep meaſures with the age, to be afraid of declaring openly for piety, to be aſhamed of the croſs of Jeſus Chriſt; to calculate your works of devotion in ſuch a way that an air and a ſavour of the world may ſtill pervade the whole: not boldly to confeſs Jeſus Chriſt; to be afraid of abſtaining from a theatre where he is inſulted, from an aſſembly where he is offended, from a proceeding by which innocence muſt ſuffer, from I know not what train of life of which the world makes a neceſſity to you, from certain maxims which wound the goſpel, and which cuſtom has eſtabliſhed as laws; to pretend to keep up all theſe conciliatory meaſures with the world, and yet to come to eat the paſſover with the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt; to pre-

ſerve a correſpondence with his enemies, and yet to ſeat yourſelves at his table; to eſteem the maxims which crucify him, and yet to wiſh to be the ſpectators and the faithful companions of his croſs; ah! it is a contradiction.

He hath overcome the world; he hath fixed it to his croſs: along with himſelf he hath given death to its maxims and errors: conſequently to ſhew his death in the communion is to renew the memory of his victory. And, if the world *lives and ſtill reigns in your heart*, my brother, do you not annihilate the fruit of his death? Do you not conteſt with Jeſus Chriſt the honour of his triumph? And, in place of ſhewing his death, do you not come to renew it with his enemies?

Beſides, in the fourth place, his death is ſhewn in this myſtery, for it is the conſummation of the ſacrifice of the croſs, and he applies the fruit of it to us, Now, what gives us a right to the fruit of the croſs, and, conſequently, to the communion? Sufferance, mortification, and a penitent and inward life. For, ſay, living in delights, ſhall you dare to nouriſh a body, like yours, enervated by pleaſures, flattered, careſſed; ſhall you dare, I ſay, to nouriſh it with a crucified body? ſhall you dare to incorporate Jeſus Chriſt, dying and crowned with thorns, with delicate and ſenſual members? Would this connection not be horrible? Will you dare, by converting his body into your own ſubſtance, to tranſform it into an effeminate and voluptuous body? Ah! it would be the perfection of iniquity. To be nouriſhed with the body of Jeſus Chriſt your members muſt become his members; his body muſt take the figure of your body. Now, his body is a crucified body; his members are ſuffering members: and, if you live without ſuffering; if you bear not upon your body the mortification of Jeſus Chriſt; if, perhaps, you have never practiſed a ſingle inſtance of

ſelf-denial;

ſelf-denial; if your days are paſſed in a tranquil effeminacy; if afflictions excite impatience; if you feel hurt at every thing which oppoſes your humour; if you preſcribe to yourſelf no works of mortification; if thoſe ſent to you by heaven are unwillingly and unthankfully received; how will you that you unite your body to that of Jeſus Chriſt? This is never reflected upon, my brethren; and, nevertheleſs, a ſoft and ſenſual life can be a preſage only of an unworthy communion.

Laſtly, The death of the Lord is ſhewn in this myſtery, for he is there himſelf as in a ſtate of death. He hath a mouth and ſpeaketh not; eyes and uſeth them not; feet and walketh not. View then, my brother, and act according to this model; behold how you ought to ſhew his death in partaking of his body; you muſt bring there eyes inſtructed to be cloſed for the earth; a tongue accuſtomed to ſilence, or to ſayings of God, as St. Paul ſays; feet and hands immoveable for the works of ſin; ſenſes either extinguiſhed or mortified: in a word, to bring there an univerſal death over your body: the ſtate of Jeſus Chriſt in the euchariſt is the ſtate of the Chriſtian on earth; a ſtate of retreat, of ſilence, of patience, of humiliation, of divorce from the ſenſes. For, what is Jeſus Chriſt in the euchariſt? He is in the world as if not there; he is in the midſt of men, but inviſible; he hears their vain diſcourſes, their chimerical plans, their frivolous expectations, but he enters not into them; he ſees their ſolicitudes, their agitations, and their enterpriſes, and he allows them to act; divine honours are paid to him, and he is inſulted; and, ever the ſame, he ſeems inſenſible alike to the inſults as to the homages: he looks on while families, empires, and ages are renewed; manners are changed; the taſte of men and of ages are inceſſantly fluctuating: he ſees cuſtoms ſink into decay and then revive; the figure of this

world

world in an eternal revolution; his inheritance divided: wars, ſeditions, and unexpected revolutions; the whole univerſe ſhaken; and he is tranquil upon its ruins; and nothing withdraws him from his cloſe and ineffable ſtudy of his Father; and nothing interrupts the divine quiet of his ſanctuary, where he is always living for the purpoſe of interceding for us. Once more, conſider and act according to this model: let us bring to the ſacred table eyes long ſince cloſed upon every thing which may hurt our ſoul; a tongue ſurrounded with a guard of circumſpection and of modeſty; ears chaſte and impenetrable to the hiſſings of the ſerpent, and to the luxury of thoſe ſounds and voices ſo calculated to ſoften the heart; a ſoul alike inſenſible to ſcorn or to praiſe; a ſoul beyond the reach of the things of this earth, and proof againſt all the revolutions of life; the ſame in good or bad fortune; viewing with indifferent eyes, every occurrence here below; eſteeming the good or the evil which occur to him as a matter that does not regard him; and, through all the agitations of the earth, the tumult of the ſenſes, the contradiction of tongues, the vain enterpriſes of men, always watchful to guard over his peace of heart, to move continually with a ſteady pace towards eternity, never to loſe ſight of his God, and to have his converſation always in heaven.

Not that I would exclude from the altar all thoſe who have not yet attained to this ſtate of death: alas! it is the buſineſs of a whole life: and the body of Jeſus Chriſt is an aid eſtabliſhed to fortify and to aſſiſt us in this undertaking. But, our inclination ought to bend to it, leſt we approach the altar unworthily; we muſt be at open war with the ſenſes, with our own corruption, with our own weakneſſes, and be continually gaining the advantage in ſome article; Chriſtian ſelf-denial muſt be practiſed; the daily victories, which the impreſſions of the world and of the

ſenſes

ſenſes gain over us, muſt be expiated by retirement, by ſilence, by tears, and by prayer; we muſt riſe with freſh vigour from every backſliding. But, I mean you to underſtand that a communion is not the concern of a day, or of a ſolemnity; that our whole life ought to be a preparation for the euchariſt; that all our actions ſhould be as ſteps which lead us up to the altar; that the life of too many in the world, even of thoſe who are not in debauchery, who reſtrict themſelves upon nothing, who live according to the ſenſes, who are warm only on the intereſts of the earth, is a life which ſhews not the death of the Lord, and which conſequently, excludes you from this myſtery. I mean you to comprehend, that the euchariſt is a feſtival, if I dare to ſay ſo, of mourning and death; that delights, pleaſures, and vain decorations diſfigure this ſacred table, and occaſion your being rejected equally as him who appears there without the wedding-garment: that the meats of the earth and the bread of heaven cannot be eaten at the ſame time; and that; on the morrow after the Iſraelites had eaten the old corn of the land of Canaan, the manna ceaſed, neither had they any more of that heavenly food. I mean you to comprehend, that this ſacrament is the fruit and not the mark of penitence; that thoſe communions, determined by a ſolemnity, give riſe to more profaners than true worſhippers; that the body of Jeſus Chriſt cannot be eaten without living by his ſpirit; that the plenitude of the holy ſpirit muſt even reſt upon a ſoul, as upon Mary, before Jeſus Chriſt can enter into it, as it were, to aſſume once more the human nature. I mean you to comprehend, that the reading of the holy books, and the ſalutary rigours of penitence, ſhould prepare an abode in our hearts for Jeſus Chriſt, to the end that we may be like holy arks, and that this heavenly manna may reſt there amidſt the tables of the law and the rod of Aaron. I mean you to underſtand, that nothing ſhould alarm you more, you who live in the dangers

of

of the age and who love them, than all the communions of which you have partaken without preparation. I mean you to underſtand, that the bread of life becomes a poiſon to the majority of believers; that the altars witneſſes almoſt more crimes than the theatre; that Jeſus Chriſt is more inſulted in his ſanctuary than in the aſſemblies of ſinners; and that the ſolemnities are no longer but myſteries of mourning for him, and days ſet apart to diſhonour him. I mean you, in a word, to underſtand, that, in order to approach it worthily, a reſpectful faith is required which enables us to diſcern; a prudent faith which leads us to examine ourſelves; a lively faith which cauſes us to love; a noble faith which induces us to ſacrifice ourſelves: without theſe it is rendering one's ſelf guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord; it is eating and drinking their own condemnation.

Ah, Lord! how little have I hitherto known the innocence and the extreme purity which thou requireſt of thoſe who come to eat of this heavenly food! The Centurion, that man of ſo fervent, ſo humble, and ſo enlightened a faith; that man ſo rich in good works, who loved thy people, who raiſed up edifices to thy name, and appropriated them to public prayers, and to the interpretation of thy ſcriptures; that man does not think himſelf worthy even to receive thee in his houſe: even the pureſt of virgins, when informed by thy angel that thou wert to deſcend into her womb, is terrified at it; ſhe contemplates her own nothingneſs; and, if the power of ſpeech ſtill remains to her, it is to aſk, how can this be? And who am I, Lord, to dare to ſeat myſelf at thy table with ſo little precaution? I, who come to appear empty before thee; who have nothing to offer to thee but the refuſe of an heart ſo long engroſſed by the world; who am thine only by intervals, and who ſtill leaves to the created and to the paſſions the main

part

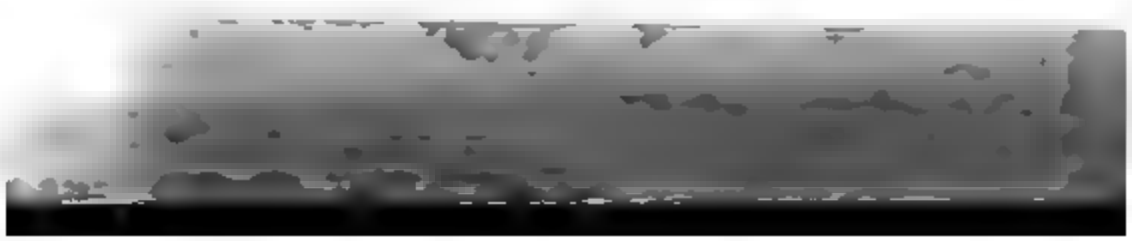
part of my heart; who bring to thine altars only weak eſſays of ſalvation, and conſummated works of ſin; who have nothing above other ſinners but the abuſe of thy bleſſings; but unavailing lights; but ſentiments which evaporate in vain wiſhes; but a thouſand inſpirations, which gain nothing from me but fruitleſs ſteps to converſion; but an heart incapable of familiariſing itſelf either with ſin or with virtue; but a diſpoſition naturally good, and almoſt intuitively inimical to exceſs and to vice, and which I, however, have ſpoiled.

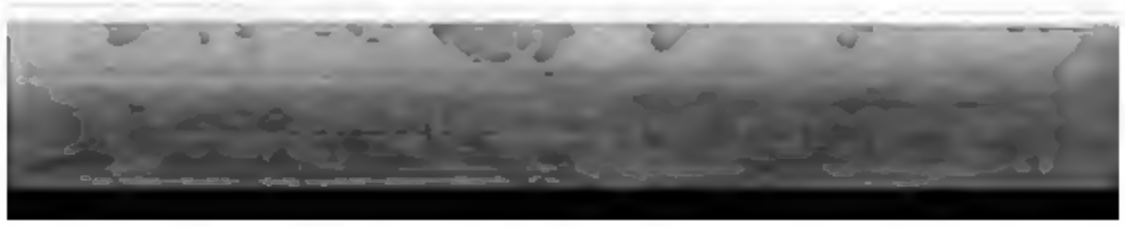
Ah, Lord! the fruits of an holy communion are ſo abundant, ſo ſenſible; the ſoul quits it ſo overflowed with thy bleſſings and thy grace, that, when I had no other proof of the unworthineſs of my communions than their inefficacy, I ought to tremble and be humbled. When thy body is eaten worthily, we are told that the hunger is not allayed; and I withdraw from that ſacred table wearied out, and tired of mine homages: I breathe, quitting it, as on quitting a drudgery, or an affair to which ceremony alone calls me: I congratulate myſelf that it is over, as I would do on being rid of a painful undertaking; and, if I feel any reliſh excited, it is for the world and for pleaſures. When thy body is eaten worthily, we abide in thee, and thou abideſt in us; that is to ſay, that thy precious blood, which ſtill flows in our veins, leaves us thy inclinations, thy traits, thy reſemblance, and that we are another thee; noble and heavenly inclinations ſhould alone be ſeen in us, and ſentiments worthy of the blood we have received: and, nevertheleſs, I always find in me only terreſtrial deſires, mean and groveling tendencies, and an heart ſtill crawling in the dirt, and incapable of ſoaring above the created, and of returning to thy boſom from whence it came. When thy body is eaten worthily, thou telleſt us that we live for thee, and eternally; and I have continued

to live for the world, for myſelf, for thoſe around me, for my pleaſures, for my ſchemes of advancement, for mine affairs, for a family, for children, for my glory; for you, ſcarcely a ſingle moment in the day. What then muſt I do, Lord? Muſt I retire from thy table? What! this fruit of life ſhould be forbidden me? What! the bread of conſolation ſhould no longer be broken for me? No, Lord, thou doſt not mean to exclude me from it, but only that I be prepared for it; thou refuſeſt me not the bread of children, but thou wouldſt that mine unworthineſs force thee not to give me a ſerpent in place of it. Prepare then thyſelf in mine heart an abode worthy of thee; make the rough and crooked ways of it ſmooth, and let the heights be levelled; purify my deſires; correct my inclinations, or rather create within me new ones. Thou alone canſt be thy precurſor, and prepare the way for thee in ſouls. Fill us then, Lord, with thy ſpirit, to the end that we may eat of thy body worthily, and live eternally for thee.

Now, to God, &c.

FINIS.





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